

MOONSIGHTING IN AUSTRALIA

Reviving the Prophetic Practice



Dr. Shabbir Ahmed
Dr. Ikramullah Ahmed



Moonsighting in Australia- Reviving the Prophetic Practice

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About the Author

Mufti, Dr. Shabbir Ahmed

Shaykh Mufti, Dr. Shabbir Ahmed is among those distinguished personalities who truly need no introduction. He is a renowned scholar whose name is well recognised across scholarly and community circles. Shaykh Dr. Shabbir Ahmed is a distinguished figure who has combined knowledge with action, narration with deep understanding, and *Da'wah* with education. He has devoted his entire life to serving Islam and the Muslim community.

Birth and Educational Journey

He was born on the 6th of September 1961 and began his blessed journey by memorising the Noble Qur'ān at a young age. He continued his pursuit of Islamic knowledge for sixteen years of formal study, during which he earned the *Shahādah 'Ālamiyyah* (equivalent to a master's degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies) in 1985.

***Ḥadīth* Studies**

He had the honour of studying the sciences of *Ḥadīth* under a group of distinguished scholars and masters of this noble field, who combined precision in transmission with depth of understanding. Among his notable teachers were:

- The eminent scholar and *Muḥaddith*, **‘Allāmah ‘Abd al-Rashīd al-Nu‘mānī** ﷺ – a prolific author known for his meticulous research.
- The jurist and *Ḥadīth* scholar, **Muftī al-A‘ẓam Walī Ḥasan al-Tonki** ﷺ – who harmonised *Fiqh* and *Ḥadīth* and greatly benefited the ummah through his vast knowledge.
- The devout and ascetic scholar, **Muḥammad Idrīs al-Mīrathī** ﷺ – a major *Muḥaddith* whose gatherings radiated light and guidance.
- The astute jurist and accomplished *Ḥadīth* scholar, **Muftī Aḥmad al-Raḥmān** ﷺ – known for his firm grounding in both *Fiqh* and *Ḥadīth*.
- The pious and scrupulous scholar, **Badi‘ al-Zamān** ﷺ – who dedicated his life to the service of the *Sunnah*.
- The great *Muḥaddith* and famous *Musnid*, **Miṣbāḥullāh Shāh** ﷺ – whose circles of learning were beacons of light.

- The noble martyr and devoted scholar, **Ḥabībullāh Mukhtār** ﷺ – who sacrificed his life in the path of knowledge and truth, attaining the honour of martyrdom.

These luminaries - may Allāh elevate their ranks - were guiding stars whose knowledge, piety, and efforts in preserving the *Sunnah* left an everlasting mark.

In 1991, Shaykh completed his higher specialisation in *Ḥadīth* studies, attaining mastery in this noble discipline. He later pursued his PhD on Imām Abū Yūsuf's *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, focusing on the authentication of its *Aḥādīth* and biographical analysis of its narrators, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Aḥmad Iqbāl at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. He was awarded the highest academic degree in contemporary Islamic sciences. Alongside, he completed various courses in Urdu, Arabic, English, computer literacy, and the Internet.

Teaching and Preaching Services

He began his professional career in 1985, working with an Urdu newspaper in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He later devoted himself to teaching in both

religious and contemporary institutions. He served as *Imām* and *Khaṭīb* at the central mosque located at the headquarters of the Pakistan Army in Karachi for an extended period.

In 1992, he migrated permanently to Australia with his family. Since then, he has resided there, dedicating his life to the service of Islam day and night. Rather than pursuing worldly gain, he uses his resources to support his family, siblings, and friends for the sake of Allāh.

Religious and Scholarly Contributions

Before migrating to Australia, Shaykh had a strong passion for writing and publishing - a passion that continues to this day.

1. He has been delivering Qur'ān lessons in Sydney for over 32 years. From these lectures, the first volume of his *Tafsīr* was compiled and published under the title "*Tafsīr Aḥsan al-Ḥadīth*."
2. His PhD research on *Kitāb al-Kharāj* by Imām Abū Yūsuf was published under the title "*Al-Kashshāf 'an Takhrīj Aḥādīth Kitāb al-Kharāj wa Taḥqīq Rijālih*."
3. He authored a comprehensive book on the issue of moonsighting, published in both Urdu and English.

4. His English guidebook "*Manāsik of Ḥajj and 'Umrah*" has been printed multiple times and serves as a valuable manual for pilgrims.
5. His book "*Tārīkh al-Ḥajj wa al-Ḥaramayn wa al-Ṭarīqah al-Jadīdah lil-Ḥajj wa al-'Umrah*" presents a detailed and enduring discussion combining the history and rituals of Ḥajj.
6. "*Mamnū'āt wa Makrūhāt-e-Islām*" (Urdu).
7. "The Forbidden and Disliked Acts in Islam" (English).
8. "The Virtue of the Night of Mid-Sha'bān."
9. "The *Shar'ī* Status of Mechanical Slaughter."
10. "The Establishment of *Shar'ī* Councils in Non-Muslim Countries."
11. "One Hundred Ways to Paradise" (in both Urdu and English).
12. "*Al-Durrul Munaddad fī Rijālī Mu'atta' Muhammad wa takhrijī Ahadithihi.*"
13. Virtues of Friday and *Durūd Sharīf* with 1000 *Durūd Sharīf*.
14. Numerous research articles in Urdu, Arabic, and English published in the Journal of Islamic Studies.

He also serves as an external examiner for master's and PhD theses at several universities including: The University of Karachi, The University of Sindh, Federal Urdu University, Bahawalpur University,

Punjab University, Balochistan University, Hamdard University, Abdul Wali Khan University, Lahore University, Okara University, Benazir Bhutto University, and the National University of Modern Languages (NUML). Approximately One Hundred scholars have been awarded their PhDs based on his recommendations.

Positions and Responsibilities

Aside from his scholarly and research engagements, Shaykh Mifti, Dr. Shabbir Ahmed holds several significant positions:

1. Registered Marriage Celebrant.
2. Marriage Counsellor.
3. Former Member of the Australian Health Ethics Committee.
4. Coordinator of Moonsighting Australia – a national committee of over 150 ‘*Ulamā*’ from across Australia committed to preserving the *Sunnah* of moonsighting.
5. Member of the Council of Imams NSW (Sydney, Australia).
6. Member of the *Muftī* Council.
7. Former Member of the Regional Council of the University of New South Wales.

8. Member of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC).
9. *Shari'ah* Advisor for MCCA Islamic Finance Australia - the largest Islamic financial institution in the country.
10. President of Qubaa Association of Western Sydney, established in 2016.

Shaykh had long aspired to establish a religious institution in Sydney, and by the grace of Allāh, this dream has now become a reality.

Current Services Provided by Masjid and Madrasah Qubaa:

- Teaching the Qur'ān
- Qur'ān memorisation classes for boys and girls
- Part-time Qur'ān classes (*Nāzīrah* and *Hifẓ*)
- Weekend Qur'ān classes
- A six-year 'Ālim Course
- A two-year Arabic course
- A one-year *Shari'ah* course
- A one-year *Tajwīd* course for adults

- Weekly Ladies' *Dars-e-Qur'ān*
- Youth programs
- Short courses on various Islamic topics
- Marriage counselling
- *Fatwā* services
- Organising Islamic seminars and conferences on diverse topics

Through his tireless efforts, many men and women have embraced Islam at his hands. The Muslim community continues to benefit immensely from his dedication to spreading Islamic knowledge - both among scholars and the general public.

About the Author

Dr. Ikramullah Ahmed

Dr. Ikramullah Ahmed is an accomplished scholar and teacher in the field of Islamic studies. He holds a diverse range of educational qualifications that reflect his deep commitment to Islamic knowledge and the Arabic language. Dr. Ikramullah completed an *‘Ālim* course (*Sharī‘ah*) in 2010 at *Dārul-‘Ulūm* College in Fakwner, Victoria, which provided him with a strong foundation in Islamic knowledge. He obtained a Bachelor of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Honours), with a major in Qur’ān & *Sunnah*, from the esteemed International Islamic University Malaysia in 2015.

His passion for the Arabic language led him to pursue a Master of Arts in Classical Arabic from Charles Sturt University, where he graduated from in 2018. In 2020, Dr. Ikramullah embarked on his PhD journey, researching the topic of moonsighting issues in Australia. He successfully completed and submitted his thesis and was awarded his PhD in 2025.

Dr. Ikramullah's commitment to Islamic education and the Arabic language extends beyond academia. Since 2016, he has actively been a part of the Arabic department at Western Grammar School (Sydney), where he has taught and written Arabic textbooks for the school.

He is also a teacher at Madrasah Qubaa in Mount Druitt (Sydney). In this role, he excels as a Qur'ān (*Hifth*) teacher, imparting the sacred knowledge of the Qur'ān to students. Additionally, Dr. Ikramullah serves as an Advanced Arabic grammar teacher and an assistant *Imām*. He is also a registered Minister of Religion, NSW Justice of the Peace and a Marriage Celebrant.

Authorship and Publications:

- **Author of Pathway to Understanding the Qur'ān** – a six-textbook series currently used at Western Grammar School as part of its Arabic curriculum, designed to introduce children to basic Arabic in a clear and structured manner.
- **Author of Pathway to Arabic Grammar** – a comprehensive two-volume work covering Arabic

grammar and morphology from beginner to advanced levels, currently taught in the two-year Arabic course at Madrasah Qubaa.

- **Author of Pathway to Reading the Qur'ān** – a simplified *Qā'idah*-style beginner's guide that teaches students how to read the Qur'ān, presently used at Madrasah Qubaa for Qur'ān learning classes.

- **Co-author of the research article** "*The Practice of Australian Muslims on Moonsighting: Beginning of Ramaḍān and 'Eīd*," which presents findings from his PhD survey on moonsighting practices in Australia.

- **Author and editor of numerous articles and newsletters published through Pathway to Ilm**; an educational initiative aimed at community awareness and authentic Islamic guidance.

- **Contributor** (Writing – review & editing, original draft, visualisation, formal analysis, data curation, conceptualisation) of "*Assessment and Review of Modern Lunar Crescent Visibility Criterion*", published in *Icarus* (Elsevier B.V.) a Q2-ranked journal internationally recognised for publishing Dr. Schaefer's key research on lunar crescent visibility.

Transliteration Table

Arabic	English
ا	ā (Elongated sound)
ث	Tha
ح	Ḥa
خ	Kh
ذ	Dha
ش	Sh
ص	Ṣ
ض	Ḍ
ط	Ṭ
ظ	Ẓ
ع	‘
غ	Gha
ي	ī

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1 - Introduction

We, as Muslims, must all be grateful to Allāh ﷻ for granting us the honour of being among the followers of the Noble Prophet ﷺ. No matter how much gratitude we express for this greatest blessing, it will never be enough. With this blessing, however, comes responsibility - foremost among them is obedience to Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ.

Recognising the lofty status of this great Prophet ﷺ, it is our duty to follow him in every matter. Whatever he ﷺ has commanded us to do, we must, as members of his Ummah, accept wholeheartedly - without hesitation or resistance. Before his ﷺ commands, we should submit humbly and set aside our personal reasoning and opinions.

In today's age of widespread trials and tribulations, one of the great challenges we face is the neglect of the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Many people abandon the blessed practices and commands of the Prophet ﷺ under the pretext that "It is only *Sunnah*, not obligatory."

Among such neglected practices is the *Sunnah* of moonsighting. Those who disregard it often mock the ones who uphold it, saying things like, “People have reached the moon, yet these individuals are still looking for it in the sky.” They base their practice solely on astronomical calculations, determining the start of Ramaḍān and ‘Eīd accordingly, thereby disregarding a continuous *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that has been upheld for over fourteen hundred years - followed by all the noble *Ṣaḥābah* رضي الله عنهم, the *Tābi’īn*, the *Tabi’ al-Tābi’īn*, the great jurists, the *Imāms* of the *Madhāhib*, the *Muḥaddithīn*, the righteous caliphs, and the entire Muslim *Ummah*.

Suddenly, a group has introduced a grave innovation - something unprecedented in the history of Islam - and urges people to adopt it. I consider it my religious duty to revive this *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ that is being erased today. Understanding the importance of this matter, I have written this book.

In it, I have established through the Qur’ān, *Ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, the teachings of the great *Imāms* and *Muḥaddithīn*, as well as through the consensus and continuous practice of the *Ummah*, that the visual

moonsighting (*ru'yah baṣariyyah*) is the authentic and continuous *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, while the calculated sighting (*ru'yah 'ilmiyyah*) based on astronomical computation is an innovation and a deviation from the true path.

My son, Dr. Ikramullah Ahmed, completed his PhD on moonsighting in 2025 from Charles Sturt University. Some of his findings will also be presented in this book, particularly the results of the comprehensive survey he conducted on how Australian Muslims determine the beginning and ending of Ramaḍān. His research offers valuable insight into the current practices of the Muslim community in Australia and complements the historical and *fiqh*-based discussions presented throughout this work.

1.1 Following the Noble Prophet ﷺ

Allāh ﷻ has made our success - in both this world and the Hereafter - dependent upon complete obedience to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Any path other than his, no matter how appealing it may seem outwardly, is rejected. To deviate from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ is to stray from the straight path.

The *Sunnah* of moonsighting is among the significant and enduring *Sunan* of the Prophet ﷺ. Those who turn away from it are indeed misguided. Therefore, I begin this book by emphasising the importance of adhering to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

Allāh ﷻ has revealed numerous verses in the Qur'ān regarding the obligation of following the Noble Prophet ﷺ.

1.2 Verses on Following the Prophet ﷺ

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

1. “Say: If you truly love Allāh, then follow me; Allāh will love you and forgive your sins. And Allāh is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:31)

﴿فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾

2. But no, by your Lord, they will not (truly) believe until they make you (O Prophet) the judge in all disputes between them and find no resistance within themselves against your decision and submit in full submission. (al-Nisā' 4:65)

﴿مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ﴾

3. Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allāh. (al-Nisā' 4:80)

﴿وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾

4. Whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger has truly attained a great success. (al-Aḥzāb 33:71)

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾

5. Indeed, in the Messenger of Allāh you have a perfect example — for whoever hopes in Allāh and the Last Day and remembers Allāh often. (al-Aḥzāb 33:21)

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَالًّا مُبِينًا﴾

6. *It is not for a believing man or woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decided a matter, to have any choice in their affair; and whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger has gone far astray. (al-Aḥzāb 33:36)*

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ﴾

7. *O you who believe! Respond to Allāh and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. (al-Anfāl 8:24)*

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ﴾

8. *O you who believe! Obey Allāh and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him while you hear (his message). (al-Anfāl 8:20)*

﴿وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ﴾

9. *Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger; but if you turn away, then know that the Messenger's duty is only to deliver the clear message. (al-Taghābun 64:12)*

﴿وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ﴾

10. *Whoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger, and fears Allāh and is conscious of Him - they are indeed the successful.* (al-Nūr 24:52)

﴿فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾

11. *Let those beware who oppose the Messenger's command, lest a trial afflict them or a painful punishment befall them.* (al-Nūr 24:63)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ﴾

12. *O you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger, and do not render your deeds void.* (Muḥammad 47:33)

﴿وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا﴾

13. *Whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger, for him is the fire of Hell, in which he shall abide forever.* (al-Jinn 72:23)

﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ

الْعِقَابِ﴾

14. *Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. And fear Allāh - surely Allāh is severe in punishment. (al-Ḥashr 59:7)*

1.3 Aḥādīth on Following the Prophet ﷺ

فَمَنْ أَطَاعَ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ عَصَى مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَدْ عَصَى اللَّهَ وَمُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَرَقَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ

1. Whoever obeys Muḥammad ﷺ has indeed obeyed Allāh, and whoever disobeys Muḥammad ﷺ has indeed disobeyed Allāh. Muḥammad ﷺ is one who separates between people. (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 7281)

كُلُّ أُمَّتِي يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَبَى، قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ: وَمَنْ أَبَى؟ قَالَ: مَنْ أَطَاعَنِي دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَقَدْ أَبَى

2. All my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse. They said: O Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ)! Who will refuse? He said: “Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, and whoever disobeys me is the one who refuses (to enter it).” (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 7280)

دَعَوْنِي مَا تَرَكْتُكُمْ، إِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِسُؤَالِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ، فَإِذَا هَمَّيْتُكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ، وَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِأَمْرٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ

3. Leave me as I leave you, for the people who were before you were ruined because of their questions and their differences over their prophets. So, if I forbid you to do something, then keep away from it. And if I order you to do something, then do of it as much as you can. (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 7288)

تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ أَمْرَيْنِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوْا مَا تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِمَا كَتَبَ اللهُ وَسُنَّةَ نَبِيِّهِ

4. I have left two matters with you. As long as you hold to them, you will not go the wrong way. They are the Book of Allāh and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet ﷺ. (Muwaṭṭaʿ Mālik: Book 46, Ḥadīth 3)

عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ مَرْفُوعًا: فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

5. Reported by Anas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as a *Marfūʿ* narration: “He who rejects my *Sunnah* is not from me.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1401)

عَنْ أَبِي أَيُّوبَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ، فَقَالَ: ذُلَّنِي عَلَى عَمَلٍ أَعْمَلُهُ يُدْنِيَنِي مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ، وَيُبَاعِدُنِي مِنَ النَّارِ، قَالَ: تَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ لَا تُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا، وَتُقِيمُ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتُؤْتِي الزَّكَاةَ، وَتَصِلُ ذَا رَحِمِكَ فَلَمَّا أَذْبَرَ، قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: إِنْ تَمَسَّكَ بِمَا أُمِرَ بِهِ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ.

6. It is narrated on the authority of Abū Ayyūb رضي الله عنه that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “Direct me to a deed which draws me near to Paradise and takes me away from the Fire (of Hell).” Upon this he (the Holy Prophet) said: “You worship Allāh and never associate anything with Him, establish prayer, and pay Zakat, and do good to your kin.” When he turned his back, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ remarked: “If he adheres to what he has been ordered to do, he would enter Paradise.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 14a)

قَالَ أَنَسُ بْنُ مَالِكٍ رضي الله عنه قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: " يَا بُنَيَّ إِنْ قَدَرْتَ أَنْ تُصْبِحَ وَتُمْسِيَ لَيْسَ فِي قَلْبِكَ غِشٌّ لِأَحَدٍ فَأَفْعَلْ". ثُمَّ قَالَ لِي: " يَا بُنَيَّ وَذَلِكَ مِنْ سُنَّتِي وَمَنْ أَحْيَا سُنَّتِي فَقَدْ أَحْيَانِي وَمَنْ أَحْيَانِي كَانَ مَعِيَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ".

7. Narrated Anas bin Mālīk رضي الله عنه, The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said to me: “O my son! If you are capable of (waking up in) the morning and (ending) the evening, while there is nothing of deception in your heart for anything, then do so.” Then he said to me: “O my son! That is from my *Sunnah*. Whoever revives my *Sunnah* then he has loved me. And whoever loved me, he shall be with me in Paradise.” (Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī: 2678)

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لِبِلَالِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ: "اعْلَمْ". قَالَ: مَا أَعْلَمُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: "اعْلَمْ يَا بِلَالُ". قَالَ: مَا أَعْلَمُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: "أَنَّهُ مَنْ أَحْيَا سُنَّةً مِنْ سُنَّتِي قَدْ أُمِيتَتْ بَعْدِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلَ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يَنْقُصَ مِنْ أَجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ ابْتَدَعَ بِدْعَةً ضَلَالَةٌ لَا يَرْضَاهَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُوزَارِ النَّاسِ شَيْئًا".

8. The Prophet ﷺ said to Bilāl ibn al-Hārith: "Know." He said, "What should I know, O Messenger of Allāh?" The Prophet ﷺ said again: "Know, O Bilāl." He said: "What should I know, O Messenger of Allāh?" The Prophet ﷺ said: "Know that whoever revives a *Sunnah* from my *Sunnah* that has been abandoned after me will receive a reward equal to that of those who act upon it, without their rewards being diminished in the least. And whoever introduces a misguided innovation which Allāh and His Messenger do not approve of will bear a burden of sin equal to that of those who act upon it, without their sins being diminished in the least." (Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī: 2677)

Despite these clear Qur'ānic verses and authentic *Aḥādīth*, it is truly unfortunate that in our times many people rely solely on their intellect, turning away from the sacred commands of the Prophet ﷺ. They use

flawed interpretations to escape his guidance and justify their neglect by arguing that science has advanced and the world has progressed beyond the old ways. They claim that acting upon the Prophet's teachings today is difficult and outdated - that those *Aḥādīth* applied only to an era that was not as advanced as ours.

Yet it is well known that Islām was revealed for all people and for all times. It will remain the same until the Day of Judgment - for the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the urban and the rural alike. Everyone is equal in the obligations of Islam. Therefore, such reasoning is clearly false and fundamentally unacceptable.

2 - The *Sunnah* of Moonsighting

Among the noble *Sunan* of the Prophet ﷺ is the *Sunnah* of *ru'yat al-hilāl* (moonsighting). Sadly, in today's time this *Sunnah* is not given the importance it deserves. The sighting of the crescent is directly linked to two fundamental obligations (*Farā'id*) in Islam - the beginning of fasting (*Ṣawm*) and the commencement of *Ḥajj*. Numerous *Aḥādīth* have been narrated on this matter which include the Prophetic saying: "Fast when you see the moon and end your fast when you see it."

2.1 Acts of Worship Dependent on Moonsighting

Islamic law has attached all rulings connected to specific days with the sighting of the moon. For instance, the beginning of Ramaḍān is determined by seeing the new moon; the ending of the fast and the celebration of *ʿĪd* are also determined by sighting the moon. Even the days of *Ḥajj* - one of the most important pillars of Islam - are established through moonsighting. There are many other rulings that similarly depend on the crescent's visibility.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah رحمہ اللہ has discussed this matter in great detail in his treatise “*Ru’yat al-Hilāl wa al-Ḥisāb al-Falakī*” (The Sighting of the Crescent and Astronomical Calculation), a work well worth reading for its deep insight into this subject.

2.2 Are Fasting and the Two ‘Eīds Merely Festivals or Acts of Worship?

It is important to first understand the true nature of *Ṣawm*, the two ‘Eīds, and *Ḥajj*. Are these occasions merely social gatherings and celebrations, or are they acts of ‘*ibādah*? If they are viewed only as communal or festive events, their significance would seem limited. However, upon deeper reflection, it becomes evident that these are, in essence, Acts of Worship - the gatherings that accompany them are secondary.

The essence of ‘*ibādah* is *Ṭā’ah* - to act in accordance with what has been commanded by the *Sharī’ah*, without giving any weight to personal reasoning or opinion. The conditions set by Islamic law in acts of worship are binding upon us.

For example, consider *Ṣawm*. If someone were to question why fasting is prescribed from dawn (*Ṣubḥ*

Ṣādiq) until sunset, and suggest extending it until 'Ishā', or reducing or increasing the number of fasting days to twenty-eight or thirty-one - or decide to complete thirty days regardless of the moon's appearance - such reasoning would hold no value in *Sharī'ah*. Similarly, if someone were to suggest ending the fast on the twenty-ninth day without waiting for the new moon, or to start fasting on a particular day simply to align with the majority - whether or not the moon has been sighted - these would all be baseless innovations.

The answer to all such rational inventions is simple: the rulings concerning Ṣawm and the 'Eīds come from Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. True worship lies in obeying these divine commands. Therefore, the Prophet's ﷺ instruction - "*Fast upon sighting the moon and end your fast upon sighting it*" - is binding upon us. Accepting and acting upon this command is not merely following a tradition, but the very essence of 'Ibādah itself.

2.3 The Wisdom Behind Basing the Beginning and End of the Lunar Month on *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*

Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī رحمته الله, while explaining the wisdom behind the condition of moonsighting in *Fath al-Bārī*, beautifully states:

فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين ولم يقل فاسئلوا أهل الحساب والحكمة فيه
كون العدد عند الأغماء يستوي فيه المكلفون فيرتفع الاختلاف والنزاع عنهم

“The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘If it is cloudy, then complete thirty days.’ The Prophet ﷺ did not say: ‘Ask the astronomers.’ The wisdom behind this ruling is that completing thirty days to determine the month’s beginning is easy for everyone - all individuals are equal in this regard. Furthermore, when the principle of moonsighting is upheld, differences and disputes are naturally eliminated.”¹

The fundamental issue is that we have not given the explicit command of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ the importance it deserves. As a result, we now find ourselves divided over such matters.

¹ Fath al-Bārī, 4/127

‘Allāmah al-‘Aynī رحمه الله in ‘*Umdat al-Qārī* explains the wisdom of moonsighting as follows:

وعلق الشارع الصوم وغيره بالرؤية لرفع الحرج عن امته في معاناة حساب التيسير

“The Lawgiver (the Prophet ﷺ) made fasting and other rulings dependent upon moonsighting in order to save the *Ummah* from the hardship of astronomical calculations and the complexities of such sciences.”¹

Shāh Walī Allāh al-Muḥaddith al-Dihlawī رحمه الله explains the same point in his renowned work *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*:

أقول: لما كان وقت الصوم مضبوطاً بالشهر القمري باعتبار رؤية الهلال، وهو تارة ثلاثون يوماً، وتارة تسع وعشرون: وجب في صورة الاشتباه أن يرجع إلى هذا الأصل.

“I say that since the time for fasting has been fixed by the *Sharī‘ah* according to the lunar month, based on the sighting of the crescent - which is sometimes thirty days and sometimes twenty-nine - then in case of uncertainty, one must return to this foundational principle.”²

¹ ‘Umdat al-Qārī, 10/409

² Ḥujjatullāh al-Bālighah, 2/79

Muftī A'zam Pakistan, Mawlānā Muḥammad Shafi'  has also eloquently discussed the wisdom behind *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*:

“The truth of the matter is that Islam does not recognise divisions based on nationality, language, or geography. In its view, Muslims of the East and the West are one nation. Its rulings are not confined to a few cities but are meant for all of humanity - including towns, villages, mountain regions, and remote islands where, even in this age of scientific advancement, the tools of astronomical observation are not accessible.

If the Messenger of Mercy  had made it obligatory upon Muslims - focusing only on a few educated urban dwellers - to determine the new moon through mathematical calculations, telescopic instruments, or by reaching above the clouds into the sky, then consider how much hardship the Ummah would have faced! Even leaving aside the past fourteen centuries, just within the light of the twentieth century, such a command would have caused immense difficulty across the Muslim world.

Even if such methods had been declared recommended rather than obligatory, the privilege

would have belonged only to the wealthy who could afford telescopes, observatories, or aircraft. The poor would be deprived of this virtue in their worship. And it is evident that creating such a distinction between the rich and the poor is completely against the spirit of Islam.”¹

Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muftī Rashīd Aḥmad رحمہ اللہ stated:

“The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ made *Ru’yah* (actual sighting) the condition for establishing the month. The wisdom in this is that the affairs and acts of worship of the general Muslims should not depend on the opinion or decision of one or a few individuals. Rather, these matters should remain connected to the direct observation of the common Muslims, so that they may perform their acts of worship with insight (*‘alā wajh al-baṣīrah*) instead of blind following.

In this way, they will not feel that their worship and religious matters are under the control or mercy of a few people. They will also be protected from doubts and anxieties such as thinking that perhaps the

¹ Risālah Ru’yat al-Hilāl: 20–21

astronomer made a mistake - whether accidentally or deliberately for some perceived reason.

By making visual sighting a condition for confirming the new moon, the *Sharī'ah* has safeguarded individuals from blind imitation and from placing their acts of worship under the control of others. One should be willing to bear the effort and difficulty involved in *Ru'yah* and accept the slight inconvenience of differing dates, rather than surrender their acts of worship to others. Instead, let them perform their worship with clarity, understanding, and conviction.”¹

2.4 Qur'ānic Verses Regarding the Crescent (Hilāl)

Let us now take a brief look at the Qur'ānic verses related to the crescent moon.

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِةِ ۖ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ﴾

1. *They ask you about the new moons. Say, “They are measurements of time for the people and for Hajj.”*
(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:189)

¹ Aḥsan al-Fatāwā, 4/493

Imām Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr رحمته الله explains this verse as follows:

Abū al-‘Āliyah رحمته الله said: We have been informed that some of the Companions رضي الله عنهم asked the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, “O Messenger of Allāh, why were the crescent moons created?” Upon this, Allāh ﷻ revealed the above verse. The Prophet ﷺ explained that Allāh ﷻ has made them as signs for determining the times of fasting, breaking of fast, the waiting period (*‘iddah*) for women, and other matters of religion.¹

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr رحمته الله further narrates from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما under this same verse, that the Prophet ﷺ said:

عن نافع، عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: "جعل الله الأهلة مواقيت للناس، فصوموا لرؤيته، وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غم عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين يوما".

Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Allāh has made the crescent moons as indicators of time for people, so fast upon sighting it

¹ Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr: 1/522

and end your fast upon sighting it. If the sky is overcast, then complete the count of thirty days.”¹

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه also commented on this verse, saying: “They ask you about the crescents - meaning, why do the crescents increase and decrease in size? The response was: Say, O Muḥammad ﷺ, “They are measurements of time for the people,” meaning, they are signs by which people can determine their religious matters, the waiting periods of women, and the times for fasting and celebration.”²

These explanations show that the crescent moon holds a vital role in the *Sharī‘ah*, serving as a divine indicator for the regulation of Islamic acts of worship and social obligations.

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ﴾

2. “He is Allāh ﷻ, Who made the sun radiant and the moon a light, and determined its phases so that you

¹ Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr: 1/522

² Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās: 33

may know the number of years and calculation of time.” (Sūrah Yūnus, 10:5)

Ibn Taymiyyah رحمته الله explains that the reckoning of months and years is entirely dependent on the phases of the moon. Likewise, the knowledge of time and calculation is based on it, for in some months, when differences arise, people return to the lunar month for certainty. This is what Allāh ﷻ referred to in the verse: *“Say, they are measurements of time for the people and for Ḥajj.”* The crescent moon thus determines people’s times - especially for Ḥajj. From what has been mentioned, it becomes clear that the regulation of months and years is based solely upon the crescent moon, and nothing else can truly replace it. This lunar system is clear, natural, and provides ease for people. Moreover, it brings about many benefits and wards off numerous harms.

‘Allāmah ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Baghdādī رحمته الله comments on the verse, *“He determined its phases (وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ)”*, saying:

It is said that the pronoun *“hu”* in *“wa qaddarahu”* refers exclusively to the moon, because its movement through its phases is much quicker. Through the

moon, one knows the completion of months and years, for in the *Sharī'ah*, the recognised months are those based on *ru'yah* (sighting of the crescent). The year recognised in *Sharī'ah* is the lunar year, not the solar year. The moon passes through twenty-eight phases (*manāzil*) in total.¹

﴿وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ﴾

“And We have determined phases for the moon, until it returns like an old, dried date stalk.” (Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36:39)

Shaykh al-Islām ‘Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī رحمته الله explains this verse as follows:

“Just like the sun, the moon too does not remain in one state - it continuously waxes and wanes. Allāh ﷻ has appointed for it twenty-eight phases (*manāzil*), through which it passes in a precise and measured order. The preceding verse mentioned the alternation of night and day, followed by reference to the sun, which governs the formation of seasons and solar

¹ Tafsīr al-Khāzin, 2/429

years. Here, the discussion turns to the moon, whose movement determines the lunar months.

At the end of the month, the moon and the sun come together, causing the moon to disappear from sight. As it moves ahead, it becomes visible again and gradually increases, phase by phase, until it reaches its full brightness on the fourteenth night. Thereafter, it begins to diminish gradually until it returns to its initial state - thin, curved, and dim, resembling the old stalk of a date palm.”¹

2.5 Aḥādīth Regarding the Sighting of the Crescent

It is now appropriate to mention some of the *Aḥādīth* that emphasise *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* (the sighting of the crescent). Numerous *Aḥādīth* have been narrated on this subject, in which the Prophet ﷺ commanded the Muslims to rely upon actual sighting when determining the start and end of the lunar months. A brief search reveals more than forty such narrations, and further research easily uncovers even more. Many

¹ Tafsīr ‘Uthmānī: 2/436

noble Companions  narrated *Aḥādīth* on this matter - among them are:

1. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb 
2. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar 
3. Abū Hurayrah 
4. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās 
5. ‘Ā’ishah al-Ṣiddīqah 
6. Ḥudhayfah 
7. Ṭalq ibn ‘Alī 
8. Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh 
9. al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib 
10. Abū Bakrah Nufay’ ibn al-Ḥārith 
11. Rāfi’ ibn Khadīj 
12. ‘Adī ibn Ḥātīm 

Below are a few selected narrations which clearly demonstrate the importance of *Ru’yat al-Hilāl*:

عن عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنه أنَّ رسول الله ﷺ ذَكَرَ رَمَضَانَ فَقَالَ: لَا تَصُومُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْا الْهِلَالَ، وَلَا تُفْطِرُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْهُ، فَإِنْ غَمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَقْدُرُوا لَهُ.

1. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ mentioned Ramaḍān and said: “Do not begin fasting until you see the crescent, and do not end it until you see it. If it is obscured from you, then complete the count of thirty days.” ¹

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنه أنَّ رسول الله ﷺ ذَكَرَ رَمَضَانَ، فَضَرَبَ بِيَدَيْهِ فَقَالَ: الشَّهْرُ هَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا، ثُمَّ عَقَدَ إِبْهَامَهُ فِي الثَّالِثَةِ، فَصُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ وَأَفْطِرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ، فَإِنْ غَمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَقْدُرُوا لَهُ ثَلَاثِينَ.

2. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ mentioned Ramaḍān and, while explaining with his hands, said: “The month is like this, and this, and this,” (folding his thumb the third time), “Fast when you see it and end your fast when you see it. If it is obscured from you, then complete thirty days.”²

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1/346

² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1/405

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنه أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: إِنَّا أُمَّةٌ أُمِّيَّةٌ لَا نَكْتُبُ وَلَا نَحْسِبُ الشَّهْرَ هَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا - وَعَقَدَ الإِبْهَامَ فِي الثَّالِثَةِ - وَالشَّهْرُ هَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا - يَعْنِي تَمَامَ ثَلَاثِينَ.

3. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: “We are an unlettered people who can neither write nor count. The month is thus, and thus folding his thumb when he said it the third time.”¹

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنه عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: إِنَّا أُمَّةٌ لَا نَكْتُبُ وَلَا نَحْسِبُ، الشَّهْرُ هَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا، يَعْنِي مَرَّةً تِسْعًا وَعَشْرِينَ، وَمَرَّةً ثَلَاثِينَ.

4. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: “We are an unlettered nation; we neither write nor calculate. The month is sometimes twenty-nine days and sometimes thirty.”²

عَنْ مَالِكٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ رضي الله عنه أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: الشَّهْرُ تِسْعٌ وَعَشْرُونَ، فَلَا تَصُومُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْا الْهِلَالَ، وَلَا تُفْطِرُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْهُ، فَإِنْ غَمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ ثَلَاثِينَ.

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1/406

² Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1/347

5. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “The month is twenty-nine days, so do not fast until you see the crescent, and do not end your fast until you see it. If it is obscured from you, then complete the count of thirty days.”¹

عن عبد الله بن عمر رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: إن الله تبارك وتعالى جعل الأهلة مواقيت فإذا رأيتموه فصوموا وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له أتموه ثلاثين.

6. Narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Indeed, Allāh, the Blessed and Exalted, has made the crescents as indicators of time. Therefore, when you see it, begin your fast, and when you see it again, end your fast. If it is obscured from you by clouds, then complete the count as thirty days”².

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له واعلموا أن الشهر لا تزيد على ثلاثين.

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1/346

² Al-Sunan al-Kubrā lil-Bayhaqī: 4/345

7. Narrated from Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: "If the moon is concealed from you by clouds, then complete the count as thirty days, and know that the month does not exceed thirty."¹

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رضي الله عنه قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: "إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الْهَيْلَالَ فَصُومُوا وَإِذَا رَأَيْتُمُوهُ فَأَفْطِرُوا فَإِنْ غَمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَصُومُوا ثَلَاثِينَ يَوْمًا".

8. Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: "Whenever you sight the new moon of Ramaḍān, begin fasting; and when you sight the new moon of Shawwāl, end your fast. If the sky is overcast and the moon is obscured, then complete the month as thirty days."²

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رضي الله عنه قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: "صُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ وَأَفْطِرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ فَإِنْ غُمِّيَ عَلَيْكُمُ الشَّهْرُ فَعُدُّوا ثَلَاثِينَ".

9. Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: "Begin fasting upon sighting the new moon and end fasting upon sighting it. But if the sky is

¹ Al-Mustadrak lil-Hākim: 1/585

² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1/406

overcast and its position is concealed from you, then complete the count as thirty days¹".

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: "لا تَقْدَمُوا الشَّهْرَ يَوْمٍ وَلَا يَوْمَيْنِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُوَافِقَ ذَلِكَ صَوْمًا كَانَ يَصُومُهُ أَحَدُكُمْ، صُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ وَأَفْطِرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ، فَإِنْ غُمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَعُدُّوا ثَلَاثِينَ، ثُمَّ أَفْطِرُوا".

10. Narrated from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: "Do not begin fasting one or two days before the month (of Ramaḍān) unless it coincides with a fast that one of you habitually observes. Fast upon sighting the new moon and end fasting upon sighting it. If it is concealed from you by clouds, then complete the count as thirty days, and then celebrate 'Eīd."²

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: إن النبي ﷺ قال: "صُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ وَأَفْطِرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ، فَإِنْ غُمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَكْمِلُوا الْعَدَدَ".

11. Narrated from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه: The Prophet ﷺ said: "Fast upon sighting the new moon and end

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1/406

² Sunan al-Tirmidhī: 1/265

fasting upon sighting it. If it is concealed from you, then complete the count (of thirty days).”¹

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال النبي ﷺ - أو قال أبو القاسم رضي الله عنه - "صُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ وَأَفْطِرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ، فَإِنْ غُمِّيَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَكْمِلُوا عِدَّةَ شَعْبَانَ ثَلَاثِينَ".

12. Narrated from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه: The Prophet ﷺ - or Abū al-Qāsim رضي الله عنه - said: “Fast upon sighting the new moon and end fasting upon sighting it. If it is concealed from you, then complete the count of Sha‘bān as thirty days.”²

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله ﷺ ذكر رمضان فقال: "لا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا تفطروا حتى تروه، فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدد ثلاثين".

13. Narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ mentioned the month of Ramaḍān and said: “Do not begin fasting until you see the new moon, and do not end fasting until you see it. If it is concealed from you, then complete the count as thirty days.”³

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1/406

² Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1/346

³ Muwaṭṭa’ Imām Mālik: 287

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: لا تقدموا الشهر بصيام يوم ولا يومين الا ان يكون شيء يصومه احدكم ولا تصوموا حتى تروه ثم صوموا حتى تروه فإن حال دونه غمامة فأتموا العدة ثلاثين ثم أفطروا.

14. Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Do not begin fasting one or two days before the month unless it coincides with a fast that one of you habitually observes. Do not fast until you see the new moon, then fast until you see it again; and if clouds obstruct it, complete the count as thirty days and then celebrate ‘Eīd.”¹

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: صوموا الهلال لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين.

15. Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Fast upon sighting the crescent and end fasting upon sighting it. If it is concealed from you, then complete the count as thirty days.”²

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن حال بينكم وبينه سحب فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين.

16. Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Fast upon sighting it and end fasting

¹ Sunan Abī Dāwūd: 1/338

² Sunan al-Nasā’ī: 1/329

upon sighting it. If clouds come between you and it, then complete the count as thirty days.”¹

عن ربي بن حراش عن حذيفة بن اليمان رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: لا تقدموا الشهر حتى ترو الهلال أو تكملوا العدة ثم صوموا حتى ترو الهلال أو تكملوا العدة-

17. Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Do not begin the month until you see the new moon or complete the count, then fast until you see the new moon or complete the count.”²

عن ربي عن بعض أصحاب النبي ﷺ قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: لا تقدموا الشهر حتى تكملوا العدة أو ترو الهلال ثم صوموا ولا تفطروا حتى ترو الهلال أو تكملوا العدة ثلاثين-

18. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Do not begin the month until you complete the count or see the new moon; and do not end fasting until you see the new moon or complete the count as thirty days.”³

عن عائشة رضي الله عنها قالت: كان رسول الله ﷺ يتحفظ من هلال شعبان ما لا يتحفظ من غيره ثم يصوم لرؤية رمضان فإن غم عليه عد ثلاثين يوماً ثم صام-

¹ Musnad Aḥmad: 3/445

² Sunan Abī Dāwūd: 1/338

³ Sunan al-Nasā’ī: 1/329

19. ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها said: “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was more particular about observing the crescent of Sha‘bān than any other month. He would begin fasting upon sighting the crescent of Ramaḍān, and if it was obscured, he would complete the count as thirty days before fasting.”¹

عن عبد الرحمن بن زيد بن الخطاب أنه خطب الناس في اليوم الذي يشك فيه فقال: ألا إني جالست أصحاب رسول الله ﷺ وسألتهم وإنهم حدثوني أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته وأنسكوا لها فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا ثلاثين فإن شهد شاهد فصوموا وأفطروا. وفي رواية أحمد: وإن شهد شاهدان مسلمان فصوموا وأفطروا.

20. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn al-Khaṭṭāb delivered a sermon on the day of doubt and said: “I sat with the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and asked them, and they informed me that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘Fast upon sighting it, end fasting upon sighting it, and perform your sacrifice accordingly. If it is concealed from you, complete the count as thirty days. If one witness testifies, fast and end fasting.’ In Aḥmad’s narration: ‘If two Muslim witnesses testify, then fast and end fasting’.”²

¹ Musnad Aḥmad: 42/83

² Musnad Aḥmad: 31/191

عن عبد الرحمن بن زيد بن الخطاب يقول: أنا صحبنا أصحاب النبي ﷺ وتعلمنا منهم أنهم حدثونا أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن أغمي عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين فإن شهد ذوا عدل فصوموا وأفطروا وأنسكوا.

21. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: “We accompanied the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and learned from them. They narrated to us that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘Fast upon sighting it, end fasting upon sighting it; if clouds obscure it, complete the count as thirty days. If two trustworthy witnesses testify, then fast, end fasting, and perform your sacrifice’.”¹

عن جابر بن عبد الله ﷺ قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: إذا رأيتم الهلال فصوموا وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا فإن أغمي عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين يوماً.

22. Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh ﷺ reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “When you see the new moon, begin fasting, and when you see it again, end fasting. If it is obscured from you, complete the count as thirty days.”²

عن أبي بكرة ﷺ قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين يوماً.

¹ Sunan al-Dāraqūṭnī: 2/371

² Musnad Aḥmad: 22/400

23. Abū Bakrah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Fast upon sighting it and end fasting upon sighting it. If it is concealed from you, complete the count as thirty days.”¹

عن مسروق والبراء بن عازب رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن غم عليكم فأتوا ثلاثين-

24. Masrūq and al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Fast upon sighting it and end fasting upon sighting it. If it is obscured from you, then complete thirty days.”²

عن طلق بن علي رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: إن الله - عز وجل - جعل هذه الأهلة مواقيت للناس فإذا رأيتموه فصوموا وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا فإن غم عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين-

25. Ṭalq ibn 'Alī رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Indeed, Allāh, Mighty and Exalted, has made these crescents as indicators of time for the people. When you see it, begin fasting; when you see it again, end fasting; and if it is concealed from you, complete the count as thirty days.”³

¹ As-Sunan al-Kubrā lil-Bayhaqī: 4/347

² Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr li al-Ṭabarānī: 2/25

³ Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr li al-Ṭabarānī: 8/397

عن طلق بن علي رضي الله عنه قال سمعت رجلاً سأل النبي ﷺ عن اليوم الذي يشك فيه فيقول بعضهم هذا من شعبان وبعضهم هذا من رمضان فقال رسول الله ﷺ: لا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ولا تفطروا حتى تروا الهلال فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين.

26. Ṭalq ibn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said: “I heard a man ask the Prophet ﷺ about the day of doubt - some said it belongs to Sha‘bān and some to Ramaḍān. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘Do not fast until you see the new moon, and do not end fasting until you see it. If it is concealed from you, then complete the count as thirty days.’”¹

عن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: لا تقدموا هذا الشهر صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن غم عليكم فعدوا ثلاثين.

27. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Do not begin this month early. Fast upon sighting it, end fasting upon sighting it; and if it is concealed from you, complete the count as thirty days.”²

عن رافع بن خديج رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ: أحصوا عدة شعبان لرمضان ولا تقدموا الشهر بصوم فإذا رأيتموه فصوموا وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا العدة ثلاثين يوماً ثم أفطروا.

¹ Al-Sunan al-Kubrā li al-Bayhaqī: 4/350

² Al-Sunan al-Kubrā li al-Bayhaqī: 4/349

28. Rāfi‘ ibn Khadīj رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Count the days of Sha‘bān for Ramaḍān and do not begin the month early by fasting a day before it. When you see it, begin fasting; when you see it again, end fasting. If it is concealed from you, complete the count as thirty days and then celebrate ‘Eīd.”¹

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنه قال: ترى الناس الهلال فأخبرت رسول الله ﷺ أني رأيته فصامه وأمر الناس بصيامه.

29. Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said: “People were observing the sky for the new moon, and I informed the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that I had seen it. He then fasted and ordered the people to fast as well.”²

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه قال: جاء أعرابي إلى النبي ﷺ فقال: أبصرت الهلال الليلة قال: أتشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمداً عبده ورسوله؟ قال: نعم، قال: يا بلال أذن في الناس فليصوموا.

30. Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه reported: “A Bedouin came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: ‘I have seen the new moon tonight.’ The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Do you testify that there is no deity but Allāh and that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ The Prophet

¹ Sunan al-Dāraqūṭnī: 2/364

² Al-Sunan al-Kubrā li al-Bayhaqī: 4/357

ﷺ then said: ‘O Bilāl, announce to the people that they should begin fasting’.”¹

عن ربيعي بن حراش عن رجل من أصحاب النبي ﷺ قال: اختلف الناس في آخر يوم من رمضان فقدم أعرابيان فشهدا عند النبي ﷺ بالله لأهلا الهلال أمس عشية فأمر رسول الله ﷺ الناس أن يفطروا.

31. A man from among the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ narrated: “People differed regarding the last day of Ramaḍān. Two Bedouins came and testified before the Prophet ﷺ, swearing by Allāh that they had seen the crescent the previous evening, so the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ ordered the people to end their fast.”²

عن ربيعي ابن حراش عن أبي مسعود ؓ قال: أصبح الناس صيامًا لتمام ثلاثين فجاء رجلان فشهدا أنهما رأيا الهلال بالأمس فأمر رسول الله ﷺ الناس فأفطروا.

32. Abū Mas‘ūd ؓ reported: “People were fasting on the thirtieth day, when two men came and testified that they had seen the new moon the previous night. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ then ordered the people to end their fast.”³

¹ Al-Mustadrak li al-Ḥākim: 1/437

² Sunan al-Dāraqūṭnī: 2/374

³ Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr li al-Ṭabarānī: 17/239

عن أبي عمير بن أنس بن مالك قال: حدثني عمومة لي من الأنصار من أصحاب رسول الله ﷺ قالوا غم علينا هلال شوال فأصبحنا صياماً فجاء ركب من آخر النهار فشاهدوا عند رسول الله ﷺ أنهم رأوا الهلال بالأمس فأمرهم رسول الله ﷺ أن يفطروا من يومهم وأن يخرجوا لعيدهم من الغد.

33. Abū ‘Umayr ibn Anas ibn Mālik reported: “Some of my uncles from among the Anṣār, who were Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, told me: The crescent of Shawwāl was obscured from us, so we began the day fasting. Later that day, a group of riders arrived and testified before the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that they had seen the crescent the previous night. The Prophet ﷺ then instructed the people to break their fast that day and to go out for ‘Eīd the next morning.”¹

عن أبي مالك الأشجعي عن الحسين بن الحارث الجدلي - جديلة قيس - أن أمير مكة خطب ثم قال: عهد إلينا رسول الله ﷺ أن ننسك للرؤية فإن لم نره وشهد شاهدا عدل نسكنا بشهادتهما فسألت الحسين بن الحارث: من أمير مكة؟ قال: لا أدري، ثم لقيني بعد فقال: هو الحارث بن حاطب أخو محمد بن حاطب. ثم قال الأمير: إن فيكم من هو أعلم بالله ورسوله مني وشهد هذا من رسول الله ﷺ وأوماً بيده إلى رجل. قال الحسين: فقلت لشيخ إلى جنبي: من هذا الذي أوماً إليه الأمير؟ قال: هذا عبد الله بن عمر ؓ وصدق، كان أعلم بالله منا، فقال: بذلك أمرنا رسول الله ﷺ.

¹ Musnad Aḥmad: 34/191

34. Abū Mālik al-Ashja'ī reported from al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥārith al-Jadhalī: “The governor of Makkah delivered a sermon and said: ‘The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ commanded us to perform the sacrifice upon sighting the crescent. If we do not see it and two trustworthy witnesses testify, we perform the sacrifice based on their testimony.’ I asked al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥārith, ‘Who is the governor of Makkah?’ He said, ‘I do not know,’ then later met me and said, ‘He is al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥāṭib, the brother of Muḥammad ibn Ḥāṭib.’ The governor then said: ‘Among you is one who knows Allāh and His Messenger better than I do,’ and he pointed towards a man. I asked an elder beside me, ‘Who is the man the governor pointed to?’ He said, ‘That is ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ؓ and he is right - he was more knowledgeable of Allāh than we were. The Prophet ﷺ commanded us in this manner’.”¹

From all these narrations, it can be understood that the issue of moonsighting is not one that can or should be taken lightly. Numerous *Aḥādīth* emphasise the same command of the Prophet ﷺ - to begin Ramaḍān upon sighting the moon and to celebrate ‘Eid upon sighting the moon.

¹ Sunan Abī Dāwūd: 1/339–240

2.6 Opinions of the Fuqahā' of the Ummah Regarding Moonsighting

There is complete consensus among the *A'imma* that *visual sighting* (*Ru'yah Baṣariyyah*) is necessary for fasting and the two 'Eīds - mere knowledge or calculation is insufficient. Below are the statements of the *Fuqahā'* on this matter:

Hanafi:

'Allāmah al-Samarqandī writes:

وإنما يُعرف برؤيته الهلال إن كانت السماء مصحية، وإن كانت متغيمّة فإنه يُكمل
شعبان ثلاثين يوماً ثم يصوم عن رمضان، لما رُوي عن النبي ﷺ أنه قال: صوموا
لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن غمّ عليكم فأكملوا شعبان ثلاثين يوماً ثم صوموا.

“If the sky is clear, the beginning of Ramaḍān is determined through the sighting of the crescent. If the sky is cloudy, then thirty days of Sha‘bān should be completed, after which fasting for Ramaḍān should begin. This is because the Prophet ﷺ said: “Fast upon sighting it (the moon) and break your fast upon sighting it, and if clouds obstruct it from you, then complete thirty days of Sha‘bān, then fast.”¹

¹ Tuḥfat al-Fuqahā': 1/345

‘Allāmah Ibn Nujaym al-Ḥanafī writes:

ويثبت رمضان برؤية هلاله أو بعد شعبان ثلاثين يوماً، لحديث الصحيحين: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته، فإن غمّ عليكم فأكملوا عدة شعبان ثلاثين يوماً

“Ramadān is established either by sighting the crescent or after the completion of thirty days of Sha‘bān, because in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* it is narrated: “Fast upon sighting it and break the fast upon sighting it, and if clouds obstruct it, complete thirty days of Sha‘bān.”¹

Shams al-A‘immah al-Ḥalwānī states:

إن الشرط في وجوب الصوم والإفطار الرؤية.

“The condition for the obligation of fasting and ‘Eīd is the sighting of the moon.”²

The aforementioned statements of the Ḥanafī jurists clearly establish that the basis of the ruling is upon *Ru’yah* (visual sighting) and not upon calculation. Hence, in *Ḥāshiyah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī* it is stated:

إنه لا عبرة بقول المنجمين، فلا يثبت به الهلال.

¹ Al-Baḥr al-Rā‘iq: 2/459

² Radd al-Muḥtār: 3/355

“The statement of the astronomers holds no weight; the crescent is not established by their claim.”¹

In *Radd al-Muḥtār* it is stated:

ولا عبرة بقول المؤقتين أى في وجوب الصوم على الناس، بل في (المعراج) لا يعتبر قولهم بالإجماع، ولا يجوز للمنجم أن يعمل بحساب نفسه.

“The statement of timekeepers (astronomers) is not considered in the obligation of fasting upon the people. In *al-Mi'rāj* it is mentioned that, by consensus, their statement is not recognised, and even the astronomer himself is not permitted to act upon his own calculation.”²

Shams al-A'imma al-Sarakhsī severely criticised the people of Egypt who began fasting without sighting the moon, saying:

وقد أخطأ أهل المصر حين صاموا بغير رؤية الهلال، لقوله ﷺ: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته فإن غم عليكم فأكملوا شعبان ثلاثين يوماً. فأهل المصر خالفوا أمر رسول الله ﷺ فكانوا مخطئين.

“The people of Egypt erred when they fasted without sighting the crescent, for the Prophet ﷺ said: “Fast upon sighting it and break your fast upon sighting it, and if clouds obstruct it, complete thirty days of

¹ Ḥāshiyat al-Ṭaḥṭāwī: 646

² Radd al-Muḥtār: 3/354

Sha‘bān.” Hence, the people of Egypt disobeyed the command of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and were thus mistaken.”¹

Mālikī:

Al-Qayrawānī writes:

وصوم شهر رمضان فريضة يصام لرؤيته ويفطر لرؤيته-

“The fasting of Ramadān is an obligation that begins with the sighting of the crescent and ends with the sighting of the crescent.”²

Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Mālikī said:

ويثبت صوم رمضان بأحد شيئين اما باتمام شعبان ثلاثين يوما واما برؤية الهلال-

“The fast of Ramadān is established in two ways - either by completing thirty days of Sha‘bān, or by sighting the new moon.”³

Regarding astronomical calculations, Ibn al-Ḥājib al-Mālikī said:

ولا يلتفت الى حساب المنجمين اتفاقا.

¹ Al-Mabsūṭ li al-Sarakhsī: 3/78

² Risālah Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī: 83

³ Kifāyat al-Ṭālib al-Rabbānī: 2/276

“The the saying of the astrologers is not to be considered in this matter.”¹

Shāfi‘ī

‘Allāmah al-Shīrāzī said:

ولا يجب صوم رمضان الا برؤية الهلال، فان غم عليهم وجب عليهم استكمال
شعبان ثلثين يوما-

“Fasting in Ramadān does not become obligatory except by sighting the crescent. If the sky is overcast, it becomes obligatory to complete thirty days of Sha‘bān.”²

Imām al-Nawawī said:

يجب صوم رمضان باستكمال شعبان ثلثين أو رؤية هلاله-

“Fasting in Ramadān is established by either completing thirty days of Sha‘bān or by sighting the new moon.”³

Regarding astronomical calculation, Imām al-Nawawī also stated:

¹ Mawāhib al-Jalīl: 3/155

² Al-Muhadhdhab: 2/592

³ Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn: 2/345

فقال في "التهذيب" لا يجوز تقليد المنجم في حسابه لا في الصوم ولا في الفطر.

"In al-Tahdhīb, it is stated that it is not permissible to follow an astronomer's calculations - neither for fasting nor for ending the fast."¹

Ḥanbalī

Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī said:

وفي الجملة : لا يجب الصوم الا برؤية الهلال أوكمال شعبان ثلاثين يوما

"In short, fasting does not become obligatory except by sighting the crescent or by completing thirty days of Sha‘bān."²

Regarding astronomical calculations, he wrote with great firmness:

وكذلك لوبنى على قول المنجمين، وأهل المعرفة بالحساب فوافق الصواب لم يصح صومه وانكثرت اصابتهم لا نه ليس بدليل شرعى يجوز البناء عليه ولا العمل به فكان وجوده كعدمه، قال النبى ﷺ: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته.

If a person bases the fast on the words of the astrologers or astronomers, even if they are accurate, his fasting is invalid. Accuracy does not make it valid,

¹ Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn: 2/347

² Al-Mughnī: 4/333

because it is not a *Sharʿī* proof upon which rulings may be built or acted upon. Its existence is as though it were non-existent. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Fast upon sighting it, and end your fast upon sighting it.”¹

These, then, are the summarised views of the four schools of jurisprudence. They all agree that the criterion (*madār*) is actual sighting (*ruʾyah*) and not astronomical computation (*ḥisāb*).

Therefore, those who claim to follow any of the four Imāms are requested to show even a single statement from their respective Imāms where reliance was placed upon calculations. Only a few individuals such as Abul-ʿAbbās Ibn Surayj or Imām al-Subkī expressed such opinions, but the majority of jurists have strongly rejected these views, declaring them invalid and unacceptable. Hence, *Ṣawm* and *ʿĪd* cannot be based upon a rejected opinion.

¹ Al-Mughnī: 4/338

3 - Science and Sharī'ah

In today's age of trials and tribulations, where countless forms of *fitnah* exist, one such *fitnah* is the neglect and abandonment of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. Among these enduring *Sunan*, which the Muslim *Ummah* has continuously upheld for over fourteen centuries, is the great *Sunnah* of *Rū'yat al-Hilāl* (moonsighting).

It is now being emphatically argued that since we live in an age of science and technology, we should benefit from scientific discoveries and allow, through *Ijtihād*, the possibility of determining the beginning of lunar months solely through astronomical calculations, without the need for actual moonsighting. According to such individuals, relying on scientific data alone should suffice.

But the question arises: Do we have any permission to abandon *Sharī'ah* and instead act upon science? And can such a practice rightfully be called *Ijtihād*? There are two major misconceptions here, both completely false and baseless:

1. Acting upon science while abandoning *Sharī'ah*.
2. Labelling modern scientific research as *Ijtihād*.

Every Muslim knows that true success, in both this world and the Hereafter, lies only in following the Prophet ﷺ. Any path diverging from his guidance can never lead to success; it only leads to division and discord. The *Ummah* is already fragmented today - how regretful it is that such actions only deepen the disunity.

At times, there may appear to be some inconvenience - such as waiting to confirm whether the moon has been sighted or not. But can we not bear a few hours of delay to uphold and revive this *Sunnah* of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, which has been practiced for over fourteen centuries? Especially when the revival of a *Sunnah* that is being neglected today carries immense reward.

If these individuals are adopting the innovation of astronomical calculations out of ignorance, then may Allāh forgive them - and we can only hope that they are doing so out of ignorance. Because, as mentioned by ‘Allāmah Ibn Taymiyyah, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, and Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab, this approach of relying on astronomical calculations for moonsighting was the practice of the Jews, Christians, Shi‘ah, Rāfiḍah, and Ismā‘īlīs.

As for the first notion - that one may act upon science instead of *Sharī‘ah* - no person who possesses the fear of Allāh and understanding of the *Dīn* would ever

allow it. Anyone granting such permission is undoubtedly devoid of *Sharī'ah* knowledge and fear of Allāh.

And as for the second claim - that modern scientific research qualifies as *Ijtihād* - this is most certainly incorrect.

Below, the arguments of such liberal-minded individuals will be presented, followed by their proper refutation.

3.1 Claim: The *Aḥādīth* that mention *Rū'yah* refer to *Rū'yah 'Ilmiyyah* (intellectual perception).

Those who support astronomical calculations claim that whenever *Rū'yah* (sighting) is mentioned in the *Aḥādīth*, what is actually meant is *Rū'yah 'Ilmiyyah* (intellectual or conceptual knowledge), not *Rū'yah Baṣariyyah* (physical sighting). Some even go as far as to assert that *only* *Rū'yah 'Ilmiyyah* is intended, while *Rū'yah Baṣariyyah* is not meant at all.

To support this interpretation, they cite various Qur'ānic verses where the word *Rū'yah* is used to indicate knowledge or understanding, rather than visual sighting. They argue as follows:

1. As knowledge or awareness of something:

As in the verse:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ﴾

*“Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?”*¹ Meaning, have you not known or been informed about how your Lord dealt with them?

2. As estimation or calculation:

As in the verse:

﴿فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى﴾

*“Then consider, what do you think?”*²
- Meaning, to assess or estimate, not to see with the eyes.

3. As pure scientific knowledge and empirical observation:

As in the verse:

﴿وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ﴾

¹ Sūrah al-Fil: 1

² Sūrah al-Şāffāt: 102

*“And those who have been given knowledge see that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth and guides to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.”*¹ - Meaning, those endowed with knowledge recognise and understand its truth.

Based on such verses, they argue that in the *Aḥādīth* which mention *Rū'yah* in the context of moonsighting, what is actually meant is *Rū'yah 'Ilmiyyah* (intellectual or scientific determination) - not *Rū'yah Baṣariyyah* (visual observation).

Response:

If ignorant people make such statements, it may be understandable - their lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity with the Arabic language might lead them to such dishonest interpretations. However, it is truly surprising when scholars engage in such distortions, presenting Qur'ānic verses as proof to claim that the *Ru'yah* (sighting) mentioned in the *Ḥadīth* refers to *Ru'yah 'ilmiyyah* (intellectual perception).

Do the people of knowledge not know that in the Arabic language, a single word can have multiple meanings? And when determining which meaning is

¹ Sūrah Saba': 6

intended, should that decision be made by us, or should it be based on the meaning established by the *Sharī'ah* and the Prophet ﷺ?

In Arabic, many words carry multiple meanings depending on their context. For example, the word *Ṣalāh* (صلاة) can refer to worship, mercy, supplication, or the ritual prayer. Similarly, رفع can denote both spiritual and physical elevation - as in:

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (spiritual)

*"Allāh will raise those who have believed among you"*¹

بَل رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ (physical)

*"But Allāh raised him to Himself"*²

The word مولى is another example, used in the Qur'an for meanings such as master, ally, protector, relative, or freed slave.

These examples show that a single Arabic term can hold various shades of meaning, and the correct meaning must always be determined by context and usage as defined by the *Sharī'ah*, not by personal reasoning. The same applies to the word رأى (to see),

¹ Sūrah al-Mujādilah: 11

² Sūrah al-Nisā': 158

which in Arabic can mean seeing with the eyes or perceiving with knowledge.

Therefore, when the Prophet ﷺ said: “Fast when you see the moon, and break your fast when you see it,” the meaning of رؤية here is clearly visual sighting, not intellectual awareness or scientific calculation. The linguistic principle and Prophetic context both confirm that the *Rū'yah* intended in these *Aḥādīth* is *Rū'yah Baṣariyyah*, i.e., actual sighting with the eyes.

Additionally, the word رؤية mentioned in the *Aḥādīth* refers to رؤية بصرية (visual sighting), not رؤية علمية (intellectual perception). The strongest proof of this is the action of the Prophet ﷺ himself. He would look for the moon - if it was sighted on the 29th night, he would begin the new month; if not, he would complete thirty days.

His own practice clarifies that his saying صوموا لرؤيته (fast upon sighting it) referred to رؤية بصرية. After him, the Companions رضي الله عنهم understood and practised the same, which shows that they too took رؤية to mean visual sighting.

The Companions رضي الله عنهم were the most knowledgeable of people regarding both the Arabic language and the intent of the *Sharī'ah*.

Shaykh Muḥammad Najjār explains:

إن كلمة (رأى) في اللغة العربية إذا كانت متعدية إلى مفعول واحد فهي بصرية، وإذا كانت متعدية إلى مفعولين فهي علمية.

“In Arabic, if the verb رأى takes only one direct object, it refers to visual sighting; but if it takes two objects, it refers to intellectual perception.”¹

In the *Ḥadīth*, the verb appears as:

إذا رأيتم الهلال فصوموا، وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا، فإن غم عليكم فصوموا ثلاثين يوماً.

Here, the word رأيتم الهلال has only one object (الهلال), which proves that the intended meaning is رؤية بصرية - sighting with the eyes.

Furthermore, the Prophet’s ﷺ phrase فإن غم عليكم (if it is obscured from you) also confirms this, because the word إغمام (obscuration) only applies to physical sight, not to knowledge. One does not say that “knowledge was covered by clouds.” Hence, the wording itself indicates that the reference is to visual sighting.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Bāz refuted those who claimed that رؤية in the *Ḥadīth* means رؤية علمية, saying:

¹ Ḍiyā’ al-Sālik ilā Awḍaḥ al-Masālik li Muḥammad al-Najjār: 1/359

إن دعوى أن الرؤية في الحديث هي الرؤية العلمية دعوى مردودة، لأن الرؤية في الحديث متعددة إلى مفعول واحد، فكانت بصرية لا علمية.

“The claim that رؤية in the *Ḥadīth* refers to intellectual perception is rejected, because in the *Ḥadīth* it takes only one object, so it must mean رؤية بصرية, not رؤية علمية.”¹

3.2 Claim: Interpretation of “فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ” as *Ru’yah ‘Ilmiyyah* (Intellectual Sighting).

Some argue that in the Qur’ānic verse:

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ²

The word شهد refers to رؤية علمية - intellectual awareness - and not رؤية بصرية. They claim that once a person gains knowledge of the arrival of Ramaḍān by any means, fasting becomes obligatory without the need for physical sighting. In today’s scientific age, they argue, this knowledge is already known in advance through astronomical calculations, making visual sighting unnecessary.

¹ Majmū‘ Fatāwā li Shaykh Ibn Bāz: 15/111

² Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:185

Response:

We begin with the words of ‘Allāmah Ālūsī, who refuted this interpretation, stating:

ولا يحسن أن يقال: من علم الهلال فليصم

“It is highly inappropriate to interpret the verse as ‘Whoever knows of the new moon should fast’.”¹

Those who interpret the verse this way are engaging in *Tafsīr bi al-Ra’y* (interpretation based on personal opinion), which is impermissible.

Sound interpretation must rely on classical and authoritative commentaries (*Tafsīr Mu’tabar*). No reliable exegete has ever translated شهد in this verse to mean علم.

Let us see how the recognised scholars of *Tafsīr* have explained it:

- Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said: فمن شهد منكم الشهر فليصمه means that whoever is present (حاضر) and not travelling must fast.²

¹ Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī: 2/62

² Jāmi‘ al-Bayān: 3/193

- ‘Alī عليه السلام explained شهد as أدرك - “whoever reaches (the month) while resident must fast.”¹
- Imām Abū Ḥanīfah عليه السلام and his companions said that whoever is sane, mature, and resident when Ramaḍān begins must fast, and if he later becomes insane, he must make up those missed fasts because he was among those who “witnessed” (شهد) the month.²
- Al-Qurṭubī wrote: شهد "بمعنى حضر" - “Shahida here means to be present,” that is, whoever is in his homeland, sound, and capable should fast.³
- Ibn Kathīr, Al-Baghawī, Al-Sa’dī, Al-Bayḍāwī, Al-Samarqandī, and others all explained شهد as حضر (to be present) - not علم (to know).

Even in Arabic lexicons, الشهيد means الحاضر (one who is present)⁴, and شهد المجلس means “he attended the gathering.” When used with direct objects like الهلال, it means “to see” - شهد الهلال عاينه - he saw the new moon.⁵

¹ Jāmi‘ al-Bayān: 3/194

² Jāmi‘ al-Bayān: 3/198

³ Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī: 3/162

⁴ Lisān al-‘Arab: 8/152

⁵ Al-Mu‘jam al-Wasīṭ: 497

Therefore, linguistically, شهد carries meanings of presence and seeing, never knowing.

Imām al-Rāzī even interpreted the verse explicitly in terms of رؤية بصرية. He wrote that شهود الشهر (witnessing the month) occurs either through رؤية (seeing) or سماع (hearing reliable testimony). He explained that if a person personally sees the crescent, the obligation of fasting applies to him, for Allāh ﷻ has made witnessing the month a cause of fasting.¹

Hence, both *Tafsīr* and *Lughā* affirm that in the verse "فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ", the meaning of شهد is either حضور (being present) or رؤية (sighting). The meaning of علم (mere knowledge) is never intended. Any such interpretation is *Tafsīr bil-Ra'y*, which is baseless and contrary to the understanding of the *Salaf* and the entire *Ummah*.

3.3 Claim: In the *Ḥadīth* where the phrase "فَافْذَرُوا لَهُ" appears, it means astronomical calculation.

It is narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

¹ Tafsīr al-Kabīr: 5/96–97

"When you see it (the crescent), then fast; and when you see it, then break your fast (for 'Eīd). But if it is concealed from you by clouds, then estimate it (فَاقْدُرُوا لَهُ)."¹

The proponents of this view argue that this *Ḥadīth* explicitly refers to using estimation, calculation, and the intellect - "so estimate it" - and that this command applies generally. According to them, this means that if the moon is not visible, one should rely on astronomical calculation. In the modern age, since astronomical calculations are precise and accurate, we can determine the moon's visibility with certainty, without any possibility of error.

Response:

This is considered their strongest argument. However, when the Prophet ﷺ mentioned "فَاقْدُرُوا لَهُ" (*estimate it*) in one narration, there are fourteen other *Aḥādīth* that refer to the same situation - when the moon is not visible - yet all of them clearly command completing thirty days (*Ikmal al-‘iddah*).

These fourteen narrations use the following expressions:

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1080g

1. فَأَتَمُّوا الْعِدَّةَ ثَلَاثِينَ - "Complete the count to thirty."¹
2. فَأَتَمُّوا شَعْبَانَ ثَلَاثِينَ - "Complete Sha'bān to thirty."²
3. فَأَكْمِلُوا ثَلَاثِينَ - "Complete thirty."³
4. حَتَّى تَرَوْا الْهَيْلَالَ أَوْ تُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ - "Until you see the crescent or complete the count."⁴
5. فَصُومُوا ثَلَاثِينَ - "Then fast thirty days."⁵
6. أَحْصُوا هَيْلَالَ شَعْبَانَ لِرَمَضَانَ - "Count the crescent of Sha'bān for Ramaḍān."⁶
7. فَأَكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ ثَلَاثِينَ - "Complete the count to thirty."⁷
8. فَأَكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ ثَلَاثِينَ فَإِنَّهَا لَيْسَتْ تُغْمِي عَلَيْكُمْ - "Then complete the count to thirty, for it (the month) is not obscured from you."⁸
9. فَعُدُّوا ثَلَاثِينَ - "Then count thirty days."⁹

¹ Sunan Abi Dāwūd: 2327

² Sunan al-Nasā'ī: 2128

³ Sunan al-Nasā'ī: 2130

⁴ Sunan al-Nasā'ī: 2126

⁵ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1081a

⁶ Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī: 687

⁷ Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1907

⁸ Al-Dāraquṭnī: 230

⁹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1081c

10. فَاكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ - "Then complete the count."¹
11. فَاكْمِلُوا عِدَّةَ شَعْبَانَ ثَلَاثِينَ يَوْمًا - "Then complete the number of days of Sha'bān as thirty."²
12. فَصُومُوا ثَلَاثِينَ يَوْمًا - "Then fast for thirty days."³
13. فَعُدُّوا لَهُ ثَلَاثِينَ يَوْمًا - "Then count thirty days for it."⁴
14. فَاقْدُرُوا لَهُ ثَلَاثِينَ - "Then estimate it as thirty."⁵

Justice and logic dictate that these fourteen narrations explain the single narration that uses "فَاقْدُرُوا لَهُ". It would be illogical to interpret it the other way around - that one narration explains fourteen others.

Therefore, according to the established principles of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, the ambiguous (*Mujmal*) text must be interpreted in light of the clear (*Mubayyan*) one. Hence, the phrase "فَاقْدُرُوا لَهُ" is *Mujmal* (ambiguous), and the other fourteen narrations are *Mubayyan* (clarifying).

¹ Sunan al-Nasā'ī: 2138

² Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1909

³ Sunan Ibn Mājah: 1655

⁴ Al-Sunan al-Kubrā lil-Bayhaqī: 4/205

⁵ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1080b

In essence, all these narrations address the same ruling, though the wording differs slightly, and the intended meaning is one: "Complete thirty days."

This is also how the majority of *Muḥaddithīn*, *Fuqahā'*, and *Shāriḥīn* have understood it.

Imām Mālik in his *Muwaṭṭa'* and Imām al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* both narrated this *Ḥadīth* of Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه containing the words "فَافْذُرُوا لَهُ", and then followed it with Ibn 'Umar's رضي الله عنه own narration - a clear explanatory text:

"The month is twenty-nine nights; so do not fast until you see the crescent. If it is overcast, then complete the count to thirty."¹

Furthermore, Imām al-Bayhaqī explicitly explained this by interpreting one *Marfū'* (Prophetic) narration through another *Marfū'* narration, clarifying that "فَافْذُرُوا لَهُ" means "أَتَمُّوا" ("complete it").

He narrated:

"Indeed, Allāh has made the crescents markers of time. So when you see it, then fast; and when you see it, then break your fast. But if it is obscured, then estimate it - that is, complete thirty days."

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1907

This *Ḥadīth* is authentic and explicit, clearly proving that "فَاقْدُرُوا لَهُ" means "complete thirty days", not "calculate it through astronomy."

3.4 Claim: The sighting of the moon or knowing about it through astronomical calculation are both merely means for determining the beginning of the month.

They claim that whichever way the *Ru'yah* (sighting) is established, it is sufficient for confirming the start of the month. Hence, there is no need for an actual *Ru'yah Basariyyah* (visual sighting). If astronomical calculations inform us when the moon will be sighted, that should be enough to determine the beginning of *Ramaḍān* or 'Eīd.

Response:

The Prophet ﷺ explicitly made the beginning of the month dependent on *Ru'yah* (actual sighting). He said:

"لَا تُقَدِّمُوا الشَّهْرَ حَتَّى تَرَوْا الْهِلَالَ أَوْ تُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ ثُمَّ صُومُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْا الْهِلَالَ أَوْ تُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ."

"Do not begin the month until you see the new moon or complete the count (of the previous month to thirty

days). Then fast until you see the new moon (of Shawwāl) or complete the count.”¹

The proponents of astronomical calculations pre-determine the month - deciding in advance which day will be the start of *Ramaḍān* or ‘*Eīd*. This directly contradicts the explicit instruction of the Prophet ﷺ.

Allāh ﷻ blessed His Messenger ﷺ with concise yet comprehensive speech (*Jawāmi’ al-kalim*). If the intention were that *Ru’yah* is merely a means, the Prophet ﷺ would have said:

“When the month begins, then fast,” or “When it becomes clear to you that the month has begun, then fast.”

However, he did not say this. Rather, he tied the command of fasting specifically to *Ru’yah*.

Thus, *Ru’yat al-Hilāl* (the sighting of the crescent) is not a mere means - it is a *Shar’ī condition* for the establishment of the new month. The start of *Ramaḍān* depends upon the actual sighting of the crescent. If it is not sighted, fasting does not begin - even if it is known through calculation that the moon is above the horizon but concealed by clouds or haze.

¹ Sunan Abi Dāwūd: 2326

3.5 Claim: The sighting of the crescent moon can be compared to the calculation of prayer times.

They argue that in this modern scientific era, we no longer visually observe the sun to determine prayer times - no one checks whether the sun has risen, reached zenith, or set. Instead, we rely on clocks and scientific calculations to determine prayer times. Hence, by analogy, they argue that people should not be burdened with having to see the moon; rather, fasting and 'Eīd should begin and end based on astronomical calculations, just as prayers are scheduled by calculation.

Response:

This analogy (*Qiyās*) is *Qiyās Ma'al-Fāriq* - a false analogy. It may mislead the unlearned, but not the scholars of Islam.

Islamic law (*Sharī'ah*) rests upon four primary sources:

1. The Qur'ān
2. The *Sunnah* (*Aḥādīth*)
3. *Ijmā'* (consensus)
4. *Qiyās* (analogical reasoning)

Qiyās is only used when no clear text exists in the Qur'ān, *Sunnah*, or consensus. But if a clear text (*Naṣṣ*) already defines the ruling, *Qiyās* is invalid - as established by the principle: "*Lā ijtihād ma'a al-naṣṣ*" - There is no room for independent reasoning when a text exists.

In the case of *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*, there are over forty explicit and authentic *Aḥādīth* commanding *Ru'yah Basariyyah* (visual sighting). Furthermore, there exists *Ijmā'* (consensus) of the entire *Ummah* - the Companions, the *Tābi'īn*, the *Tabi' al-Tābi'īn*, the four Imams, and the scholars of every generation - all affirming that fasting and *'Eīd* are tied to visual sighting.

Since *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* is already established by the Qur'ān, *Sunnah*, and consensus, there is absolutely no need - nor allowance - for *Qiyās* in this matter.

Conditions of Valid *Qiyās*

1. The original case (*Aṣl*) must have a ruling proven through text or consensus, and both sides must agree upon it.
 - Here, such agreement does not exist - one group affirms *Ru'yah Basariyyah* while the other insists on *Ru'yah 'Ilmiyyah* (astronomical knowledge).

2. The analogy must not contradict a general principle (*Qā'idah 'Āmmah*).
 - The general principle here is that *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* is based on *visual sighting*. Hence, one cannot abandon it.
3. The cause (*'Illah*) must be transferable (*Muta'addiyyah*).
 - In this case, the cause is not transferable because the Prophet ﷺ explicitly tied fasting to visual sighting, not to knowledge or estimation.

Thus, this *qiyās* fails all three conditions - it is invalid both legally and rationally.

Rational Refutation

Even logically, the analogy collapses. Allāh ﷻ has established two distinct systems -

- The solar system (*Nizām Shamsī*) for determining prayer times, and
- The lunar system (*Nizām Qamarī*) for determining months and acts of worship tied to them.

Prayer times are based on fixed solar movements, as Allāh ﷻ says:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

“Indeed, the prayer has been prescribed upon the believers at fixed times.”¹

For prayers, the *Sabab* (legal cause) is time, and knowledge of that time can be attained through calculation or observation - the *Shari’ah* did not require visual observation of the sun.

However, for fasting and ‘*Eīd*, the *Sabab* is explicitly the sighting of the moon, and the Prophet ﷺ restricted it to that:

“Fast upon sighting it, and end your fast upon sighting it.”²

Therefore, their analogy is both *Shar’an* (legally) and *‘Aqlan* (rationally) invalid.

3.6 Claim: Unity of the Ummah outweighs the *Sunnah* of Moonsighting.

Ru’yat al-Hilāl (moonsighting) is merely a *Sunnah*, while unity of the Ummah is a *Farḍ* (obligation). Therefore, it is argued that, for the sake of unity, Muslims should all fast and celebrate ‘*Eīd* on the same day - even if that means fasting on the wrong day or celebrating ‘*Eīd* when it is not due - so that unity is displayed.

¹ Sūrah al-Nisā’, 4:103

² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1081b

Response:

The statement sounds appealing, but it is fundamentally flawed. The question must be asked: is there any verse of the Qur'ān or authentic *Ḥadīth* that allows us to abandon the clear commands of Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ for the sake of unity? If such a verse or *Ḥadīth* existed, we would accept it without hesitation - but the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* teach the exact opposite.

Allāh ﷻ commands:

وَاَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

“And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allāh, and do not become divided.”¹

This verse forbids division - but it also defines unity as being within the bounds of *Sharī'ah*, by clinging firmly to *the rope of Allāh*, meaning the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Real unity comes through obedience to divine law, not through compromising it. Abandoning *Sharī'ah* in the name of unity is not unity - it is rebellion.

Allāh ﷻ further says:

فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ

¹ Sūrah Āl 'Imrān, 3:103

“If you disagree over anything, refer it to Allāh and the Messenger - if you truly believe in Allāh and the Last Day.”¹

This clearly establishes that the solution to any disagreement lies in returning to Qur’ān and *Sunnah*, not in ignoring them for the sake of collective convenience. Unity obtained outside the limits of revelation is not unity but deviation.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا طَاعَةَ لِمَخْلُوقٍ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ الْخَالِقِ

“There is no obedience to the creation if it involves disobedience to the Creator.”²

And in another narration:

السَّمْعُ وَالطَّاعَةُ عَلَى الْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ فِيمَا أَحَبَّ وَكَرِهَ، مَا لَمْ يُؤْمَرْ بِمَعْصِيَةٍ، فَإِذَا أُمِرَ
بِمَعْصِيَةٍ فَلَا سَمْعَ وَلَا طَاعَةَ

“Listening and obeying (the ruler) is obligatory upon a Muslim in what he likes or dislikes, as long as he is not ordered to commit a sin. But if he is ordered to sin, then there is neither listening nor obedience.”³

¹ Sūrah al-Nisā’, 4:59

² Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī: 1707

³ Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 7144; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1839

If any form of “unity” requires disobedience to Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, then such unity is false and impermissible. Real unity can never be achieved by abandoning the commandments of *Sharī’ah*; it is only through adherence to the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* that the *Ummah* can truly unite.

3.7 Claim: Fasting and Celebrating ‘Eīd with the Majority of Muslims.

How can we say that such a large number of Muslims are wrong? Can the majority of the *Ummah* really be mistaken, and only a few be upon the truth? Therefore, we should fast and celebrate ‘Eīd with the majority, for this is what is meant by *Ijma’ al-Ummah*.

Response:

In reality, this is merely an emotional argument. The truth has always remained with the طَائِفَةٌ قَلِيلَةٌ - the small group. To determine who is upon the truth, one must see how firmly a person or group adheres to *Deen*. The Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أُمَّتِي يُقَاتِلُونَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ

“Within my *Ummah*, there will always remain a group who will fight for the truth.”¹

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1923

Reflecting on this *Ḥadīth*, it becomes clear that the Prophet ﷺ did not base truth upon numbers. Rather, he mentioned a single group, showing that even a small number may be upon the truth. As for the claim that when many people agree on something it becomes *Ijma' al-Ummah*, a look into the Qur'ānic verses, *Aḥādīth*, and the principles of *Ijma'* set by the scholars of the *Ummah* makes it clear that this refers only to the consensus of أهل العلم (the people of knowledge).

Even among *Ahl al-'Ilm*, only the consensus of those who follow the *Sunnah* is valid. The agreement of innovators (*Mubtadi'īn*) holds no weight. Yet, sadly, those who act upon the *Sunnah* are today called troublemakers, while those who abandon the *Sunnah* are praised as reformers.

Take the issue of *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*. The great *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ is being abandoned, and those who neglect it are called “progressive,” while those who strive to revive it are branded as divisive. How astonishing!

3.8 Claim: Unity of 'Eīd.

'Eīd means joy and celebration. It is deeply saddening that Muslims today do not celebrate 'Eīd together. In the same household, the husband is celebrating while

the wife is still fasting; the father is praying the *‘Eīd Ṣalāh* while the son continues his fast. Relatives do not visit one another for greetings because some are fasting while others are celebrating. Therefore, it is said that everyone should celebrate *‘Eīd* on the same day - even if it happens to be a day of fasting - so that the *Ummah* remains united.

Response:

Indeed, this situation is unfortunate. For years, I have made efforts to bring everyone together on a single position, and at times we even reached agreement (records of this exist within the *‘Ulamā’* Council). However, not long after, some turned away once again.

Our problem is that we are willing to abandon a *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ that has been continuously practiced by the *Ummah* for over fourteen centuries without disagreement, only to replace it with an innovation (*Bid‘ah*) that has no precedent in the entire history of Islam.

As for the philosophy that “if everyone celebrates *‘Eīd* together, it brings about unity and harmony in the *Ummah*,” this reasoning is so weak that responding to it seems needless. Why is all the emphasis placed on “uniting for *‘Eīd*” rather than prioritising the commands of the Prophet ﷺ? Why is there no call to

give precedence to his instruction over emotional appeals for uniformity?

If a unified 'Eīd were truly an essential matter of religion, the *Ṣaḥābah* ﷺ - who were the greatest well-wishers of this *Ummah* - would have been the first to raise this concern. Yet not once did they regard differences in moonsighting between regions as a threat to unity. The Prophet ﷺ himself never commanded that the entire world must celebrate 'Eīd on one day.

During the time of the *Ṣaḥābah*, there were differences in moonsighting between Madīnah and Shām. Their Ramaḍān began on different days, and likewise their 'Eīd fell on different days - yet they did not consider this division to be against *Waḥdat al-Ummah*. Rather, they saw it as the natural result of the *Shar'ī* command to rely upon local sighting.

This is clearly reflected in the famous narration recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, in which 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Kurayb ﷺ differed regarding the start of Ramaḍān.

Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ began fasting in Madīnah a day later than Mu'āwiyah ﷺ and the people of Shām and likewise differed in celebrating 'Eīd. When Kurayb ﷺ informed him that the people of Shām had seen the

crescent a day earlier, Ibn ‘Abbās  replied that they would continue fasting until completing thirty days, as the crescent had not been sighted in Madīnah.

This shows that the *Ṣaḥābah* did not see the difference in ‘*Eīd*’ as a problem of unity - rather, they followed the clear *Shar‘ī* ruling.

Mufti Shafi’ , the Grand Mufti of Pakistan, beautifully explains:

“For nearly a thousand years, Islam ruled vast regions across the globe, yet never once did the question of a unified ‘*Eīd*’ arise in the minds of any government or nation. Each region celebrated according to its own *Ru’yah*, without dispute, conflict, or the frantic need to confirm others’ sightings. It was a simple, pure, and correct method - but sadly, this sound approach has now been abandoned in pursuit of an imagined, illusory concept of ‘unity,’ which in reality has only led to confusion, discord, and chaos.”¹

¹ Risālah Ru’yat al-Hilāl: 36

4 - Acting upon Astronomical Calculation (Ḥisāb al-Falakī) is Incorrect for Several Reasons

Below are ten reasons that clearly demonstrate why acting upon *ḥisāb al-falakī* (astronomical calculation) is invalid according to *Sharī'ah*:

1. Abandoning the *Mutawātir Aḥādīth*

There are over forty *Aḥādīth* regarding *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*, and these have reached the level of *Tawātur* (mass-transmission). Imām Ṭaḥāwī explicitly classified the *Aḥādīth* of moonsighting as *Mutawātir*.

2. Acting upon *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* also constitutes clear disobedience to the Prophet ﷺ.

More than forty *Aḥādīth* explicitly command that fasting and *ʿĪd* must be based on *Ru'yah*, and these have reached the level of *Tawātur*.

Among the noble *Ṣaḥābah* ﷺ who narrated *Aḥādīth* on moonsighting are:

- (1) ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ
- (2) ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar ﷺ
- (3) Abū Hurayrah ﷺ

(4) ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه

(5) ‘Ā’ishah al-Ṣiddīqah رضي الله عنها

(6) Ḥudhayfah رضي الله عنه

(7) Ṭalq ibn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه

(8) Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh رضي الله عنه

(9) al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib رضي الله عنه

(10) Abū Bakrah Nufay’ ibn al-Ḥārith رضي الله عنه

(11) Rāfi’ ibn Khadīj رضي الله عنه

(12) ‘Adī ibn Ḥātim رضي الله عنه

All these *Aḥādīth* carry one consistent message: the Prophet ﷺ emphatically commanded that fasting and ‘*Eīd* be established through *Ru’yah*. These *Aḥādīth* alone are sufficient to prove that moonsighting is an essential condition for the commencement of the Islamic month.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Bāz رحمته الله stated:

النبي ﷺ أمر بالصوم لرؤية الهلال والإفطار لها وحصر ذلك فيها

“The Prophet ﷺ commanded that fasting begin with the sighting of the crescent and end with it - and he confined this ruling exclusively to *Ru’yah*.”¹

Hence, whoever relies on *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* instead of actual moonsighting is, without doubt, disobeying the Prophet ﷺ.

3. Acting contrary to the *Sunnah Mustamirrah* (continuous *Sunnah*) of the Prophet ﷺ is a serious matter.

The Prophet ﷺ, the *Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn*, the *Tābi’īn*, *Taba’ Tabi’īn*, the four *A’immah*, jurists, *Mujtahidīn*, *Muḥaddithīn*, and the entire *Ummah* throughout Islamic history - including all Muslim caliphates and even today most of the Muslim world, particularly the Arab nations - have always acted upon *Ru’yat al-Hilāl*.

No one ever declared the start of the month before the actual sighting of the moon. Yet those who rely on *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* (astronomical calculation) announce the beginning and end of the month days in advance, contradicting this established *Sunnah*.

4. Acting upon *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* is a *Bid’ah* (innovation).

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله states:

¹ Shaykh Ibn Bāz, *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā*: 15/110

والمعتمدُ على الحساب في الهلال؛ كما أنه ضال في الشريعة مبتدع في الدين.

“Whoever relies on astronomical calculation for the crescent is misguided in the *Sharī‘ah* and an innovator in the religion.”¹

Indeed, those who follow *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* are among the *Mubtadi‘īn* (innovators), having adopted a practice entirely unknown in 1400 years of Islamic history - neither found in the Qur’ān, nor in *Aḥādīth*, nor in the actions of the *Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn*, the *Ṣaḥābah* ﷺ, the *A’immah*, or any Islamic ruler. There can hardly be a worse example of *Bid‘ah*.

‘Ā’ishah ﷺ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

"من عمل عملاً ليس عليه أمرنا فهو ردّ"

“Whoever does an action that is not in accordance with our command, it is rejected.”²

And in another narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*:

“Whoever introduces into our religion that which is not from it, it is rejected.”³

In light of these *Aḥādīth*, it becomes evident that *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* is a religious innovation, a newly

¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*: 25/207

² *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 1718b

³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 1718a

introduced practice that finds no precedent in the entire history of Islam.

5. Acting upon *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* contradicts the *Ijmāʿ* (consensus) of the *Ummah*.

Those who adopt astronomical calculations oppose the *Ijmāʿ* of the *Ummah*. Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Taymiyyah, Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, Ibn Rushd, Imām al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn ʿĀbidīn, among others, have all transmitted *Ijmāʿ* that relying on *Ḥisāb al-Falakī* for determining the beginning or end of the month is impermissible.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah strongly condemned this practice, saying:

فمن كتب أو حسب لم يكن من هذه الأمة في هذا الحكم ، بل يكون اتبع غير
سبيل المؤمنين

“Whoever writes or calculates (to determine the crescent) is not from this *Ummah* in this ruling but has followed a path other than that of the believers.”¹

Even contemporary scholars affirm this consensus. The Council of Senior Scholars (*Hayʿat Kibar al-ʿUlamāʾ*) in Saudi Arabia issued an official statement (Decision No. 2) declaring:

¹ Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā, Faṭḥ al-Bārī, Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Ḥāshiyat Ibn ʿĀbidīn, Bidāyat al-Mujtahid li-Ibn Rushd.

“After reviewing the matter of determining months by calculation and consulting the opinions of the scholars, the members of the Council unanimously agreed that astronomical calculation is not to be considered, based on the Prophet’s ﷺ sayings:

‘Fast when you see it, and end your fast when you see it,’ and ‘Do not fast until you see it, and do not celebrate ‘*Eīd* until you see it.’”¹

Signatories included:

Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī, ‘Abd al-Razzāq ‘Afīfī, Maḥḍar ‘Aqīl, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Bāz, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥumayd, ‘Abd Allāh Khayyāṭ, Muḥammad al-Ḥarkan, ‘Abd al-Majīd Ḥasan, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Ṣāliḥ, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ghuṣūn, Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Āl al-Shaykh, Sulaymān ibn ‘Ubayd, Muḥammad ibn Jubayr, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ghadayyān, Rāshid ibn Khunayn, Ṣāliḥ ibn Laḥaydān, and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Manī’.²

6. Acting upon *Ḥisāb al- Falakī* Brings Hardship and Difficulty upon the *Ummah*

The command of *Ru’yat al-Hilāl* was given for every Muslim - whether one lives in a village or a city, in a wealthy nation or a poor one. The *Sharī‘ah* made it

¹

² Al-Buḥūth al-‘Ilmiyyah, vol. 3, p. 34

simple: begin and end the month by sighting the moon.

If, however, the command had been dependent on astronomical calculation, only the rich and the educated - those familiar with astronomy - would benefit, while ordinary people and the poor would be deprived. Religion would then become exclusive to the elite.

‘Allāmah ‘Aynī رحمته الله explains the wisdom behind this in *‘Umdat al-Qārī*:

"وَعَلَّقَ الشَّارِعُ الصَّوْمَ وَغَيْرَهُ بِالرُّؤْيَةِ لِرَفْعِ الْحَرَجِ عَنْ أُمَّتِهِ فِي مُعَانَاةِ حِسَابِ
التَّيَسِيرِ"

"The *Sharī‘ah* attached fasting and other rulings to physical sighting in order to remove hardship from the *Ummah* that would result from engaging in complex astronomical calculations."¹

Similarly, Imām Nawawī رحمته الله writes:

"ولأن الناس لو كلفوا بذلك ضاق عليهم لأنه لا يعرف الحساب إلا أفراد من
الناس في البلدان الكبار، فالصواب ما قاله الجمهور وما سواه فاسد مردود
بصراح الأحاديث."

¹ ‘Umdat al-Qārī: 10/409

“If people were made responsible for astronomical calculations, it would cause great difficulty, since only a few individuals in large cities are familiar with such sciences. Therefore, the correct position is that of the majority of scholars; all other views are invalid and rejected by explicit *Aḥādīth*.”¹

Shāh Walī Allāh ad-Dihlawī , in his renowned *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, beautifully explains:

“When the *Sharī‘ah* made the beginning of fasting dependent on *Ru‘yat al-Hilāl* - a lunar month that alternates between twenty-nine and thirty days - then in cases of uncertainty, it is necessary to return to the *Sharī‘ah*’s principle: if the moon is not seen, complete thirty days.”²

Muftī Muḥammad Shafī‘ , the former Grand Muftī of Pakistan, elaborates on the wisdom behind this rule:

“Islam does not recognise nationalism, linguistic identity, or geographical boundaries. For Islam, Muslims in the East and West form one nation. The command of *Ru‘yat al-Hilāl* is universal - not restricted to certain cities but encompassing all humanity. Most of the world consists of towns, villages, mountainous

¹ Sharḥ al-Muḥadhdhab

² Hujjatullāh al-Bālighah: 2/79

areas, and remote islands where, even in this modern age, astronomical instruments are inaccessible.

If the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had limited the command to the educated few, instructing that in case the moon is unseen, they must determine it through calculation or observation by flying above the clouds, imagine the difficulty the *Ummah* would face! Even in our advanced times, such a ruling would impose unbearable hardship. Had this been declared even as preferable (*Mustahabb*), only the wealthy - who possess telescopes, observatories, and aircraft - could attain that virtue, leaving the poor deprived. Such distinction between rich and poor contradicts the very spirit of Islam.”¹

Muftī Rashīd Aḥmad ﷺ similarly writes:

“The Prophet ﷺ made *Ru’yat* the condition for beginning the month. The wisdom behind this is that the acts of worship of ordinary Muslims should not depend upon the opinion or decision of a few individuals. Instead, these acts should remain connected to the direct observation of the community, so that people worship with understanding rather than blind following. If the command were based on calculation, doubts would

¹ Risālah Ru’yat al-Hilāl: 20–21

arise - whether the astronomer erred or manipulated results intentionally.

By making *Ru'yat* the condition, the *Sharī'ah* preserved the independence and integrity of Muslims' worship. It is better to bear the minor inconvenience of differing dates than to surrender our religious observances to human control.”¹

7. Following Astronomical Calculations Leads to Serious Consequences

If the *Sharī'ah* ruling were based on astronomical calculations, it would create severe complications in the judicial system. A *Qāḍī* could reject valid testimonies by claiming that they do not align with astronomical data, and upright Muslim witnesses (*ʿudūl*) could be discredited. Consequently, the entire *Sharī'ah*-based framework of *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* and testimony would collapse.

8. Following Astronomical Calculation Is the Way of the Jews, Christians, and Innovated Sects

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah stated:

فديننا لا يحتاج أن يكتب و يحسب كما عليه أهل الكتاب

¹ Aḥsan al-Fatāwā: 4/493

“Our religion does not depend on writing and calculation like that of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians).”¹

He further said:

وَذَلِكَ ضَلَالٌ عَنِ دِينِ اللَّهِ وَتَغْيِيرٌ لَهُ شَبِيهٌ بِضَلَالِ الْيَهُودِ وَالنَّصَارَى

“This is a deviation from the religion of Allāh, an alteration of His *Dīn*, and a resemblance to the misguidance of the Jews and Christians.”²

And again:

وقد يقارب هذا قول من يقول من الاسماعيلية بالعدد دون الهلال

“This is similar to the statement of the Ismā‘īlī sect, who rely on numerical calculations rather than the actual sighting of the crescent.”³

Ibn Taymiyyah regarded those who rely on astronomical calculation as misguided both intellectually and religiously:

فَمَنْ أَخَذَ عِلْمَ الْهَلَالِ الَّذِي جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ مَوَاقِيتَ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحُجَّ بِالْكِتَابِ وَالْحِسَابِ
فَهُوَ فَاسِدُ الْعَقْلِ وَالِدِّينِ

¹ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā: 25/140

² Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā: 6/590

³ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā: 25/133

“Whoever determines the knowledge of the crescent - by which Allāh set the timings for people and for *Hajj* - through writing and calculation is corrupt in intellect and religion.”¹

Similarly, *Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab* said:

ديننا لا يحتاج إلى حساب ولا كتاب ، كما يفعله أهل الكتاب من ضبط عباداتهم
بمسير الشمس وحساباتها ، وأن ديننا في ميقات الصيام معلق بما يرى بالبصر وهو
رؤية الهلال، فإن غم أكملنا عدة الشهر ولم نحتاج إلى حساب

“Our religion does not depend on astronomical computation as the People of the Book do when they regulate their worship based on the movement of the sun and its calculations. The timing of fasting in our *Dīn* is connected to visual sighting with the eye - *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*. If it is cloudy, we complete thirty days of the month; we have no need for calculation.”²

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Hajar likewise wrote:

وقد ذهب قوم إلى الرجوع إلى أهل التسيير في ذلك وهم الروافض

“Some people have resorted to relying on astronomers in this matter - and they are the *Rāfiḍah* (*Shī'ah*).”³

¹ Majmū' al-Fatāwā: 6/590

² Ibn Rajab, *Fath al-Bārī*, 2/113

³ Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, 4/127

9. Those Who Follow Astronomical Calculation Are Themselves Conflicted

Even among the proponents of *Ḥisāb Falakī*, there exists great confusion and disagreement:

1. **The first group** claims that if the moon is born any time after *Fajr* until the next *Fajr*, fasting the following day becomes obligatory. Their reasoning: once the crescent is born, it exists in the sky.
2. **The second group** says that if the birth of the moon occurs before sunset, even briefly, fasting is obligatory the next day, since the Islamic day begins after sunset.
3. **The third group** attempts to reconcile *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* and astronomical calculation by suggesting that sighting is possible only when the crescent's altitude exceeds a certain degree. Some claim visibility is impossible within thirteen hours of birth unless the moon's elevation exceeds seven degrees. Astronomers in Istanbul stipulate at least eight degrees for visibility.
4. **The fourth group** asserts that if the moon is born after sunset, its sighting is impossible, and thus any testimony should be rejected, deeming the witness deluded or false.

10. The Astronomical Approach Has No Basis in the Four *Imāms* or Any Accepted *Madhhab*

There is unanimous agreement among the *A'immah al-Arba'ah* that fasting and *'Eīd* depend solely on visual sighting (*Rū'yah Baṣariyyah*), not on knowledge or calculation.

Ḥanafīs

'Allāmah Samarqandī wrote:

“If the sky is clear, the beginning of Ramaḍān is known through *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*; if cloudy, thirty days of Sha'bān are completed, then fasting begins.”¹

***Ibn Nujaym* said:**

“Ramaḍān is established either by the sighting of the crescent or by completing thirty days of Sha'bān.”²

***Shams al-A'immah al-Ḥalwānī* stated:**

“The condition for the obligation of fasting and *'Eīd* is *Rū'yah*.”

***Ḥāshiyat al-Taḥṭāwī* explicitly notes:**

“The statement of astronomers holds no weight, even if they are righteous.”

¹ Tuḥfat al-Fuqahā': 1/345

² Al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq: 2/459

***Radd al-Muḥtār* adds:**

“The astronomers’ word carries no authority in obligating fasting; even for themselves, it is impermissible to act upon their calculations.”¹

Al-Sarakhsī harshly criticised the Egyptians who began fasting without sighting, calling it a direct violation of the Prophet’s command.

Mālikīs

Al-Qayrawānī writes:

“Fasting Ramaḍān is obligatory by sighting the crescent, and breaking the fast (*‘Eīd*) is by sighting it.”²

Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Mālikī said:

“The fasting of Ramaḍān is established by one of two means: either by the completion of thirty days of Sha‘bān, or by the *Ru’yah* of the *Hilāl*.”³

Ibn Ḥājib affirmed:

“There is consensus that the statement of astronomers holds no consideration.”⁴

¹ *Radd al-Muḥtār*: 3/355

² *Risālah Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī*: 83

³ *Kifāyat al-Ṭālib al-Rabbānī*: 2/276

⁴ *Mawāhib al-Jalīl*: 3/155

Shāfi'īs

Al-Shīrāzī wrote:

“Ramaḍān cannot be established without sighting; if obscured, thirty days of Sha‘bān must be completed.”¹

Imām al-Nawawī said:

“The fast of Ramaḍān is established by completing thirty days or by *Ru’yat al-Hilāl*.”²

He also declared: “It is impermissible to follow the astronomers’ calculations - whether for fasting or for ‘Eīd.”³

Ḥanbalīs

Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī stated:

“In summary, fasting is not obligatory except through sighting or completing thirty days of Sha‘bān.”⁴

He further added:

“Even if the astronomers’ calculation coincides with reality, it remains invalid, for it is not a *Shar‘ī* proof; thus, acting upon it is impermissible.”⁵

¹ Al-Muḥadhdhab: 2/592

² Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn: 2/345

³ Ibid, 347

⁴ Al-Mughnī: 4/333

⁵ Ibid, 338

In summary, the consensus (*Ijmā'*) of the *A'immaḥ al-Arba'ah* and classical jurists is that fasting and *'Eīd* are determined exclusively by *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*. The astronomical approach has no foundation in the Qur'ān, *Sunnah*, or *Sharī'ah*, and reliance upon it is a clear deviation introduced in later times.

5 - The Basis of the Islamic Calendar

It is worth discussing how we should establish the Islamic calendar annually, since creating it month by month would be impractical. The solution to this is, in fact, very simple. Modern astronomical research and Islamic injunctions can indeed be harmonised - there is no fundamental contradiction between them. The best principle to adopt is that we may benefit from all scientific findings in matters related to *Sharī'ah* rulings, while giving precedence to the *Sharī'ah* above all else. In reality, reconciling scientific data with Islamic law is entirely possible in practice.

Take the example of the *Hilāl*: if observatory data indicates that sighting is possible, then this can be used when drafting the Islamic calendar and determining dates. However, this determination should not be considered final, because the definitive confirmation depends on actual *Ru'yah* (sighting). If the moon is sighted, then the new month begins. In this way, both scientific research and *Sharī'ah* guidance can be observed together.

This is precisely the method used for the *Umm al-Qurā calendar* in Saudi Arabia. They prepare an annual calendar for administrative purposes, but each month they still conduct an actual moonsighting, after which they make the official announcement of the new

month. Many times, they even go against their pre-set calendar.

I personally prepare the Islamic calendar in Australia on this same basis. Naturally, the calendar is prepared once a year, not every month. On the 29th day of each lunar month, if the observatory indicates that *Ru'yah* is possible, I record that month as having 29 days. If visibility is not possible, I record it as 30 days. In this way, we act upon scientific findings while adhering to *Sharī'ah* by ensuring that every month the actual sighting of the moon is attempted. If the moon is sighted, the new month begins; if it is not sighted, the current month is completed as thirty days.

Since both scientific research and *Sharī'ah* rulings are being observed, we face no difficulty - and by the grace of Allāh ﷻ, our calendar remains almost always accurate. On the rare occasion that it differs from actual sighting, we make the necessary correction for that month according to whether *Ru'yah* occurred or not. This rarely happens because, when constructing the calendar, we only consider cases where *Imkān al-Ru'yah* (possibility of sighting) exists; we never base it on a scenario where sighting is impossible. (A detailed discussion on *Imkān al-Ru'yah* will follow later.)

Note:

Our reliance on scientific data is limited to this extent - if, according to the observatory, sighting is possible, we accept witness testimonies of *Ru'yah*. But if, according to the observatory, sighting is impossible, and someone claims to have seen the moon, we do not accept such testimony. This is because a testimony that is rationally impossible cannot be accepted in the first place.

Imkān al-Ru'yah (Possibility of Sighting)

Let us now discuss in detail what the *criteria* for *Imkān al-Ru'yah* (possibility of sighting) actually is.

5.1 Linguistic Meaning of Hilāl

To begin, we must understand what the word *Hilāl* itself means in Arabic. Linguistically, *Hilāl* signifies “appearance” or “manifestation.” It is called *Hilāl* because it becomes visible to people.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah explains the linguistic meaning of *Hilāl* as follows:

وَذَلِكَ أَنَّ الْهِلَالَ أَمْرٌ مَشْهُودٌ مَرْتَبِيٌّ بِالْأَبْصَارِ، وَمِنْ أَصَحِّ الْمَعْلُومَاتِ مَا شُهِدَ بِالْأَبْصَارِ، وَلِهَذَا سَمَّوْهُ هِلَالًا، لِأَنَّ هَذِهِ الْمَادَّةَ تَدُلُّ عَلَى الظُّهُورِ

وَالْبَيَانِ: إِمَّا سَمْعًا وَإِمَّا بَصَرًا... وَقِيلَ: إِنَّ أَصْلَهُ رَفْعُ الصَّوْتِ، ثُمَّ لَمَّا
كَانُوا يَرْفَعُونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رُؤْيَيْهِ سَمَوْهُ هَلَالًا.

Translation:

“The *Hilāl* is a visible phenomenon observed with the eyes. The most reliable knowledge is that which is witnessed by sight. Hence, it was named *Hilāl*, because its root denotes appearance and clarity - whether heard or seen. Some have said that its original meaning is ‘raising the voice’; since people used to raise their voices upon seeing it, they named it *Hilāl*.”¹

Thus, the *Hilāl* is something that must be seen with the eyes - it is defined by its visibility. Those who announce the sighting beforehand, without ever having seen the moon, contradict the very essence of the word *Hilāl* itself. How can a voice of *Takbīr* be raised for a moon that was never seen?

5.2 Some Important Terminologies

The essence of the *Shar‘ī* rulings regarding *Ru‘yat al-Hilāl* is that this important task should be carried out with full care and attention. For this reason, scholars

¹ Ru‘yat al-Hilāl wal-Ḥisāb al-Falakī: 48

in every era have made use of all available means of their time.

In connection with *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*, it is necessary and beneficial to understand the following astronomical terms and principles, so that any decision related to the sighting may be made with complete confidence and firmness - especially in cases where the moon is not visible due to clouds or other reasons. Through this, one can verify the testimony from another city to see whether the moon was truly hidden by clouds or if the moon existence or new moon time (the time of the new moon's birth) had not yet occurred.

Such situations often arise where people testify that they have seen the moon, while at times the moon actually sets before the sun. Should we then accept someone's testimony merely because he is a Muslim? There are even cases where the moon has not yet been born anywhere in the world, but a testimony arrives claiming that the moon was seen. Sometimes, testimonies even come on the 28th night that someone has sighted the moon - while it is known that the moon has not even come into existence yet.

If we reject such testimony, we are accused of not accepting a Muslim's word. Even if we do not say that the witness is lying, it may be that he saw some other white object in the sky and thought it was the

crescent. There are many such things visible in the sky, but that does not make them the moon.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the following terminologies:

1. Muḥāq (Time Unseen)
2. Tawlīd al-Qamar (New Moon / Conjunction)
3. Wujūd al-Qamar (Moon Existence)
4. Imkān al-Ru'yah (Probability of Moonsighting)

1. Muḥāq (Time Unseen):

When the moon orbits around the earth, there comes a time when the illuminated part of the moon faces the sun, and its dark side faces the earth. At that time, the moon lies between the earth and the sun. This period is called *Muḥāq* (Time Unseen). The New Moon is the exact midpoint of the *Muḥāq* phase. About one day and one night occur before it, and one day and one night after it, meaning the total duration of *Muḥāq* usually covers two nights and sometimes three, including their days.

2. Tawlīd al-Qamar (Conjunction / New Moon)

In Arabic, the New Moon is referred to as *Mīlād al-Hilāl*, *Wilādat al-Hilāl*, or *Tawlīd al-Qamar*, while in

Urdu it is called *Ijtimā' al-Shams wal-Qamar* (the conjunction of the sun and moon).

What happens is that Allāh ﷻ has set fixed stages for the moon, which He described in the Qur'ān as:

“وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ” - “He has determined its phases.”¹

When the moon completes its phases and comes directly in line with the sun, with the earth also in the same line, the New Moon Time begins.

Important clarification:

It must be made clear that the moon is not actually “born.” The use of terms like “birth” or “formation” of the moon is merely an expression. It is only a technical term that has been used conventionally.

For the beginning of the month, Islam has based its rule upon *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*, not upon the New Moon Time or *Tawlīd al-Hilāl*. And *Ru'yah* means that after the sun has set, the moon becomes visible. The moon becomes visible when there is a distance of about 10–12 degrees between it and the sun, the details of which will be discussed later.

¹ Sūrah Yūnus: 5

3. Wujūd al-Qamar (Moon Existence)

After the New Moon has occurred, if the sun sets (Sunset) and the moon remains above the horizon for some time afterward - even if for only one minute - this is called *Wujūd al-Qamar* (Moon Existence), since the moon exists on the horizon after the setting of the sun.

Now, the question arises: Can the date of the new month be determined before the Moon Existence? Some individuals claim that the mere existence of the moon is sufficient.

For example, Dr. Professor Ilyas, in his paper on the calculation system, writes:

“Using the difference between the time of moonset and sunset, the method once used in the Republic of Maldives eventually evolved, after several adjustments, into accepting even a one-minute gap between sunset and moonset as the beginning of the new month - whether the crescent had formed or not.”¹

However, this notion is incorrect both rationally and textually.

¹ Bayn al-Aqwāmī Islāmī Calendar — Urdu Translation: 19

Rationally: Because when the moon is only a few minutes old, it does not yet align perfectly between the earth and the sun. It is slightly higher than the sun's line, which is why it sets after the sun. However, its dark side still faces the earth while the illuminated side faces the sun. Hence, such a moon - though it exists - can never be seen. Even if one tries to view it through a telescope, only the dark body of the moon would be visible, which cannot be called a *Hilāl* in any sense.

Textually: Because the *Sharī'ah* does not accept anything that is not yet a *Hilāl*. The *Sharī'ah* has based the confirmation of the month on the sighting of the crescent, and a crescent that is only one minute old can never be seen under any circumstance.

4. *Imkān al-Ru'yah* (Probability of Moonsighting)

There is a significant difference between *Wujūd al-Qamar* and *Imkān al-Ru'yah*. For *Wujūd al-Qamar*, it is sufficient that the moon remains above the horizon even for one minute after sunset. However, for *Imkān al-Ru'yah*, once *Wujūd al-Qamar* occurs, the moon must move approximately twelve degrees away from the sun so that it escapes the intensity of the sun's rays and its illuminated part becomes visible to us. If the sky is clear, the moon can then be seen with the

naked eye. This period is known as the *Imkān al-Ru'yah* time.

Since it is clear that without *Imkān al-Ru'yah* the moon cannot be sighted, it is essential that the Islamic calendar be based upon *Imkān al-Ru'yah*. Doing so can remove all existing differences. Unfortunately, those who raise the banner of science often neglect even *Imkān al-Ru'yah*. In fact, some of them rely solely on *Wujūd al-Qamar*, and others go further - basing their judgment on the new moon itself, even if moonset before sunset occurs. Scientifically, both approaches are incorrect, for no astronomer in the world can claim that the moon can be sighted at the moment of *Wujūd al-Qamar* or *Tawlīd al-Qamar*.

A renowned astronomer, Professor Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, visited Sydney some years ago. In conversation on this topic, he also emphasised that if the calendar were based on *Imkān al-Ru'yah*, there would be no disagreement.

He added a technical point that if the angular separation between the sun and moon - or the time difference between sunset and moonset - is around forty minutes (roughly ten degrees), the moon can be seen; otherwise, it cannot.

From the above discussion, it is evident that scientific research and *Sharī* injunctions are perfectly

compatible and can easily coexist. The real problem arises when neither is followed - when those acting upon *Sharī'ah* are labelled "backward," while those ignoring both science and *Sharī'ah* cause confusion. This negligence leads to disputes, divisions, and even three different 'Eīds in a single country, becoming a source of mockery for non-Muslims.

The blame lies on those who neither adhere to *Sharī'ah* principles nor uphold scientific accuracy, resulting in the corruption of people's fasts and 'Eīds. Few realise that observing a fast in Sha'bān, believing it to be Ramaḍān, is sinful - and celebrating 'Eīd while it is still Ramaḍān is an even greater sin. Such errors occur because *Sharī'ah* has been ignored, and science too has been misused. It is hard to grasp what these individuals truly want - they abandon *Sharī'ah* on one hand and misapply science on the other, chanting slogans of unity while spreading misguidance.

Today, with scientific progress, forming an Islamic calendar is no longer as complex as before. Modern observatories not only determine whether the moon will be visible on a given day but also provide precise astronomical data, including:

1. The exact moment the moon is born
2. The time of moonset

3. The time of sunset on that day
4. The moon's age (in hours)
5. The duration for which the moon will remain above the horizon after sunset
6. The angular distance between the sun and moon
7. The moon's altitude (its height above the horizon)
8. Whether the moon can be seen from a specific location
9. The first place in the world where the moon will be visible
10. The apparent size of the moon

All these details enable accurate planning while remaining faithful to both science and *Shari'ah*.

5.3 Conditions for Moon Visibility According to the Observatory

Modern observatories provide detailed data and analysis regarding the moon, allowing us to accurately determine whether the moon will be visible on a particular day, at a specific location, and at a given time. Once these factors are clearly understood, fixing lunar dates becomes an easy task, and based on this information, an Islamic calendar can be prepared with precision.

However, the guiding principle remains unchanged: even after creating a calendar, precedence will always be given to *Ru'yah Başariyyah* (physical sighting of the moon with the eye).

Below, we will examine two key factors identified by observatories on which the visibility or non-visibility of the moon depends.

1. Age of the Moon at Sunset

The first key factor is the age of the moon at the time of sunset. Based on years of observation, when the moon's age is 20 hours or more at sunset, it is usually visible. If it is younger than this, the chances of sighting become extremely slim.

In records spanning over a century, there has been only one instance when a 13-hour-old moon was reportedly sighted - and even then, the elongation and altitude must have been unusually high. Such rare and exceptional cases cannot be taken as a standard for determining *Ru'yah* (visibility).

2. Elongation — Distance Between the Moon and the Sun

The second key factor is elongation, meaning the distance between the moon and the sun. If this distance is insufficient, the moon cannot be seen. How

far must the moon be from the sun for it to be visible? Scholars have differed on this point.

Some have said 8 degrees, but that is extremely rare and contradicted by observation, and anything contrary to observation cannot be used as a reliable basis. Others have suggested 10 degrees, while most researchers agree that the most accurate and reliable measure is 12 degrees. This is because, based on consistent observation, when the moon reaches about 12 degrees away from the sun, it becomes easily visible to the eye.

The author of *al-Taṣrīḥ* wrote:

واذا بعد عنها (عن الشمس) بعدا يسيرا من اثني عشر درجة رأينا منه (أي من القمر) أو وجهه المضي قليل وهو الهلال.

“When the moon becomes about twelve degrees away from the sun, we can see it - the illuminated part of it which is called the *Hilāl*.”¹

This clearly shows that before this degree of separation, the *Hilāl* does not form; only when its illuminated edge becomes visible to the eye can it truly be called a crescent.

¹ al-Taṣrīḥ: 52

Similarly, in *Sharḥ Chaghmīnī* it is mentioned:

واذا بعد عن الشمس مقدارا قريبا من اثني عشر جزءاً... فنرى طرفاً
منه وهو الهلال.

“When the moon becomes about twelve degrees distant from the sun, we can see one of its edges - that is the *Hilāl*.”¹

At this point, it is appropriate to quote from *Mawlānā Mūsā Khān Rūḥānī* رحمته الله in his work *Falakiyyāt Jadīdah*, who discussed this matter in detail. He wrote that due to differences in celestial conditions, classical and modern astronomers have expressed various views regarding how far eastward the moon must be from the sun at sunset for it to be visible:

1. Some said that if the moon is ten degrees east of the sun at sunset, it will be visible.
2. Others said the separation should be eight degrees.
3. A third opinion held that the moon should remain shining above the horizon for about 40 minutes after sunset.

¹ Sharḥ Chaghmīnī: 70

4. A fourth opinion fixed the minimum distance at twelve degrees.
5. A fifth view suggested between twelve and thirteen degrees - and that beyond thirteen degrees, neither the classical nor the modern astronomers deemed any further distance necessary.

He further explained that, according to the twelve-degree opinion, by the end of the month the moon will be hidden from the eye when it comes within twelve degrees of the sun on either side - westward before conjunction and eastward after conjunction - making it invisible for roughly forty-eight hours.

Since the moon travels about one degree every two hours, this means that for approximately forty-eight hours at the end of each lunar cycle, the moon cannot be seen. The new moon begins at conjunction (when the angle between the sun and moon is zero), and after roughly twenty-four hours, when it reaches twelve to thirteen degrees east of the sun, it becomes visible again.¹

From this analysis, it is evident that the minimum required separation between the moon and the sun must be around twelve degrees for visibility. Although

¹ Falakiyyāt Jadīdah: 2/16–314

some have mentioned ten or even eight degrees, the eight-degree claim is extremely rare and contradicts observation - and, as mentioned earlier, what contradicts observation cannot be taken as a valid criterion.

3. Altitude - The Elevation of the Moon from the Horizon

The third crucial factor upon which the visibility of the moon depends is its altitude. If the altitude is insufficient, sighting the moon becomes impossible. The term “altitude” refers to the angular height of the moon above the observer’s horizon at the time of sunset. For the moon to be visible, its altitude must be at least five degrees above the horizon.

It is truly astonishing that some people raise the slogan of “science” and claim that science has advanced to the point where we can determine the moon’s visibility purely through calculation - yet when we examine the actual judgments made by these claimants, it becomes abundantly clear that they neither consider elongation nor altitude.

In fact, it has often been observed that they accept differences of merely one or two degrees, and sometimes even make decisions for *‘Eīd* and fasting when the moon has already set before the sun (minus altitude), a situation in which sighting the moon is

scientifically impossible. Naturally, *Sharī'ah* cannot approve such baseless and invalid decisions. One wonders, then, what principles these individuals are truly following. My intent in pointing this out is not mockery, but rather to clarify the truth.

A few years ago, I discussed this matter with the well-known Australian astronomer Dr. Nick Lomb, and he, too, affirmed that if the moon has a minus or only two to four degrees of altitude, or if it is the same day as the new moon, sighting is simply impossible. He further noted that the moon can only be seen one or two days after the new moon, provided that the difference between sunset and moonset is at least 47 minutes.

Dr. Nick Lomb discussed these factors in detail under the heading *Visibility of the Moon* in his *Sydney Sky Guide (1997)* on page 28.

I will quote just a few lines from this book so that the reality of the matter becomes clear and evident. Dr. Nick Lomb writes:

“At new moon we do not see the moon at all. It is then in the same direction as the sun and so the lit side is a way from us. A day or two after the new moon we start seeing a small part of the lit side as a thin crescent. The first visibility of the crescent is sometime of interest for religious or other reason. It

can be seen low in the west after sunset one or two days after new moon. A Malaysian astronomer (Dr. Ilyas) has worked out a good rule-of-thumb to estimate whether the crescent will be visible on a particular evening or not. Sydney's latitude the time lag between sunset and moonset is at least 47 minutes.”¹

Dr. Nick Lomb has made the issue absolutely clear. For many years, I have personally observed that those who claim to follow science neither take this into account for Ramaḍān nor for ‘Eīd.

I have records from several years showing that those who rely on astronomical calculations often make announcements for fasting or ‘Eīd even before the moon is born, and at times, before the moon has even set after the sun.

In the entire history of observatories, there has never been a case where the moon had not yet been born, yet some people announced the beginning of the month. Unfortunately, those who rely on such premature calculations often declare the start of fasting or ‘Eīd before the moon’s actual birth, causing confusion among Muslims and invalidating their observances according to the *Sharī‘ah*.

¹ Sydney Sky Guide: 28, 1997

5.4 The full moon never completes on the fourteenth when the beginning of the month is declared before the actual sighting

It is often observed that those who begin fasting and celebrate 'Eīd based on a pre-determined declaration of the new moon - before the actual sighting - disrupt the natural lunar cycle. As a result, the full moon (*Badr*) appears not on the fourteenth, as it should, but on the sixteenth or seventeenth. Similarly, the first quarter (normally on the seventh) occurs on the eighth or ninth, and the last quarter (usually on the twenty-first) shifts to the twenty-second or twenty-third according to their incorrect reckoning.

5.5 Impact on the fasts of Ayyām al-Bīḍ

Because of such premature calculations, the *Ayyām al-Bīḍ* fasts are also affected. These fasts - a *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ - are meant to be kept on the 13th, 14th, and 15th of every lunar month. However, due to these miscalculations, people end up fasting on the 12th, 13th, and 14th instead. Thus, just as they invalidate obligatory fasts, they also distort *Sunnah* fasts.

The Prophet ﷺ observed and emphasised various types of voluntary fasts, among which the *Ayyām al-Bīḍ* fasts hold great virtue. The Prophet ﷺ consistently

observed these fasts and advised his Ummah to do the same. He said:

صَوْمُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ صَوْمُ الدَّهْرِ كُلِّهِ

"Fasting three days every month is equivalent to fasting for a lifetime."¹

Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated:

أَوْصَانِي خَلِيلِي بِثَلَاثٍ لَا أَدْعُهُنَّ حَتَّى أَمُوتَ صَوْمَ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ مِنْ كُلِّ شَهْرٍ، وَصَلَاةِ الضُّحَى، وَنَوْمٍ عَلَى وَتَرٍ

"My beloved friend (the Prophet ﷺ) advised me regarding three things which I will never abandon until I die - fasting three days of every month, performing the *Ḍuḥā* prayer, and sleeping in the state of having performed *Witr*."²

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

وإن بحسبك أن تصوم كل شهر ثلاثة أيام، فإن لك بكل حسنة عشر أمثالها، فإن ذلك صيام الدهر كله

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1979

² Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1978

"It is sufficient for you to fast three days of every month, for every good deed is multiplied tenfold, and that will be equivalent to fasting for the entire year."¹

For the purification and peace of the heart, these fasts are of immense benefit. The Prophet ﷺ said:

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِمَا يُذْهِبُ وَحَرَ الصَّدْرِ صَوْمُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ مِنْ كُلِّ شَهْرٍ

"Shall I not tell you something that removes malice from the heart? Fast three days of every month."²

In this *Ḥadīth*, the phrase *Waḥar al-Ṣadr* refers to inner malice, hatred, enmity, or excessive anger. *Subḥān Allāh!* How profound this teaching is for purifying the heart - whoever regularly observes these three fasts will, by the grace of Allāh ﷻ, remain free from grudges, conflicts, and the destructive diseases of the heart such as hatred, jealousy, anger, and backbiting.

5.6 Hilāl, Tarbee', and Badr

These are the terms used to describe the various phases of the moon. Their meanings are as follows:

After the new moon, the moon begins to move away from the sun, and when the angle between them reaches approximately twelve degrees, a thin crescent

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: 1975

² Sunan al-Nasā'ī: 2385

becomes visible from the earth. This is called *Hilāl* (crescent). Thereafter, the moon continues to move farther from the sun until, on the seventh day, the distance between them reaches 90 degrees. At this point, half of the moon is illuminated and visible - this phase is known as *Tarbee'* (first quarter).

The moon keeps moving further away until, on the 14th day, it comes directly opposite the sun, with the earth positioned between them. The angle between the sun and the moon becomes 180 degrees, and the entire face of the moon is illuminated - this is called *Badr* (full moon).

Afterwards, the moon begins to move closer to the sun again, and on the 21st day, half of it appears illuminated once more, forming another 90- or 270-degree angle with the sun. This phase is also called *Tarbee'* (last quarter).

Following this, the moon gradually wanes and returns to the state of *Mahāq* (complete darkness).

The same details regarding *Hilāl*, *Tarbee'*, and *Badr* have also been mentioned by Dr. Nick Lomb in the *Sydney Sky Guide 1997*, on page 28. He writes:

At new moon we do not see the moon at all, as it lies in the same direction as the sun and its illuminated side faces away from us. A day or two after the new

moon, we begin to see a small portion of its lit surface as a thin crescent. Each day, more of the moon becomes visible. After about a week, it reaches the first quarter phase, when half of its illuminated side is visible. About a week later, the moon's full disk appears - this is the full moon, which occurs when the moon is positioned on the opposite side of the earth from the sun.

From then onward, the visible portion of the moon decreases daily. After another week, it reaches the last quarter phase, where once again half of the illuminated side is visible. Finally, about a week later, the moon returns to the same direction as the sun - this marks the new moon once again.¹

¹ Sydney Sky Guide: 28, 1997

6 - Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī‘

The difference in horizons is real and natural. The moon follows a natural system, and its stages for each day of the month are predetermined. Undoubtedly, based on longitude and latitude, every region has its own distinct horizon. There is no room for doubt in this, as Allāh ﷻ has clearly mentioned in the Qur’ān:

“And We have appointed for the moon phases until it returns like an old, curved twig.”¹

And He also says:

“He it is who made the sun radiant and the moon luminous, and determined its phases so that you may know the number of years and the reckoning.”²

The phases are twenty-eight in total. The moon passes through one phase each night, and when it completes its final phase, it returns to the first one. It travels the celestial path in twenty-eight nights, then it becomes concealed, and after that it reappears as a crescent, continuing its journey through the same phases.³

Those who claim to follow science, despite their claims, do not consider the difference in horizons

¹ Sūrah Yā-Sīn: 39

² Sūrah Yūnus: 5

³ Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān: 17/446

valid. They regard the sighting of the moon anywhere in the world as sufficient for everyone, without any distinction - an idea that defies logic.

The difference in time zones between countries is an undeniable reality. The entire world cannot share the same time simultaneously. If we are praying *Ẓuhr* in Australia, it will be *Fajr* in Saudi Arabia. It is absurd to argue that since Makkah is the centre of the Muslim world, we should follow its timing for prayers, as this would mean offering *Fajr* at the time of *Ẓuhr* here simply because *Fajr* is being prayed at the *Ka'bah*. No scholar or jurist holds such a view; all issue the ruling that each region's inhabitants perform their prayers according to their local times.

Similarly, the reasoning that the beginning of Ramaḍān or the days of *ʿĒīd* should be determined solely based on Makkah's moonsighting, while disregarding the local sighting, is equally invalid. Just as local time is considered for prayers, local conditions must be considered for moonsighting. Therefore, fasting and *ʿĒīd* should only be decided according to the local sighting and date.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz

The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz, has written explicitly in one of his articles that the horizons (*Maṭāliʿ*) of the moon cannot be the

same throughout the world, nor is it correct to make Makkah al-Mukarramah the central reference for moonsighting for the entire Muslim world. He wrote:

“The issue of *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli*’ (difference of horizons) in moonsighting is one in which the scholars have differed. After discussion on this matter in a session of the *Dār al-Iftā*’, the majority opinion concluded that the correct view is that each region should rely upon its own local sighting. In this regard, the people of each region should refer to their local scholars.”

At the end of the same article, he wrote:

“Some people believe that the moonsighting of Makkah al-Mukarramah should be taken as the basis for determining the beginning of Ramaḍān and the ‘*Ēid*’ days for the entire world. There is neither any evidence for this in the *Sharī’ah*, nor any foundational basis for it.”¹

Imām Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī رحمته الله stated:

والصحيح عند أصحابنا أن الرؤية لا تعم الناس بل تختص بمن قرب على مسافة
لا تقصر فيها الصلاة.

¹ Al-Baḥṭh al-Islāmī, Dhūl-Hijjah 1399 AH

“According to our scholars, the correct view is that the sighting in one place does not apply to all people in general, but only to those nearby - within a distance in which shortening the prayer (*Qaṣr*) would not be permitted.”¹

According to Imām al-Nawawī, the limit does not extend beyond 78 kilometres.

Imām Ibn Rushd al-Andalusī states:

“All scholars are in agreement that the sighting of the moon in one region cannot be applied to distant lands such as al-Andalus and al-Ḥijāz.”²

This indicates that each region’s *Ru’yah* is confined to its own horizon and is not universally binding on far-off places.

Regarding *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli’*, the incident of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه and Kuraib رضي الله عنه is sufficient proof:

Narration:

Kuraib رضي الله عنه said: “Umm al-Faḍl bint al-Ḥārith sent me to Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه in al-Shām. I arrived there, fulfilled her task, and it so happened that the month of Ramaḍān began while I was in al-Shām. I saw the moon myself on the night of Friday. Later, when I came back to

¹ Sharḥ Muslim, al-Nawawī: 7/277

² Bidāyat al-Mujtahid: 2/148

Madinah, ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه asked me when we had seen the moon. I replied, ‘We saw it on the night of Friday.’ He asked, ‘Did you see it yourself?’ I said, ‘Yes, and many others saw it too, and Mu‘āwiyah fasted.’ Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said, ‘But we saw it on the night of Saturday. We will continue fasting until we complete thirty days or see it (ourselves).’ I said, ‘Will you not be content with the sighting and fasting of Mu‘āwiyah?’ He replied, ‘No. This is how the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ commanded us.’”¹

The former Chief Qāḍī of Makkah, ‘Allāmah ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥumayd رحمته الله, authored an excellent treatise on this topic titled “*Tibyān al-Adillah fī Ithbāt al-Ahillah*,” in which he quotes Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah:

“The proof in this matter is that we know with certainty that during the era of the *Ṣaḥābah* and the *Tābi‘īn*, the crescent moon was often sighted in some Muslim lands before others. This is a recurring natural phenomenon that cannot change - western regions see the moon earlier, and eastern regions later. Undoubtedly, news of such sightings would reach other regions during the same month. If it were obligatory upon those who saw it later to make up (*Qadā’*) for the missed fasts based on earlier sightings, then the early generations would have exerted effort

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1/407

to investigate moon sightings in all parts of the Muslim world just as they did for their own cities. Consequently, the obligation of *Qadā'* would have been frequent in most Ramaḍāns. Since no such reports exist, this indicates there is no basis for such an obligation. The *Ḥadīth* of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه clearly supports this.”¹

6.1 The View of the four Imāms

It is a commonly heard claim that all jurists agree that if the moon is sighted anywhere in the world, fasting and *'Eid* become obligatory upon everyone. This statement is entirely incorrect - there is no consensus among the *Imāms* on this matter.

Below, I will mention the positions of the leading jurists.

6.2 The View of the Shāfi'ī School

Only a few scholars from the *Shāfi'ī* school hold the view that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli'* (difference of horizons) is not to be considered. However, the majority of *Shāfi'ī* scholars maintain that it is indeed valid and must be taken into account.

¹ Tibyān al-Adillah fī Ithbāt al-Ahillah: 414–415

Imām al-Nawawī has already stated:

والصحيح عند أصحابنا أن الرؤية لا تعم الناس بل تختص بمن قرب على مسافة لا تقصر فيها الصلاة.

“According to our companions (the *Shāfiʿīs*), the correct view is that a sighting in one place does not apply to all people; rather, it applies only to those within a distance where prayer is not shortened.”¹

He further wrote:

إذا رُئي هلال رمضان في بلدٍ ولم يُرَ في الآخر، فإن تقرب البلدان، فحكمهما حكم البلد الواحد، وإن تباعدا فوجهان، أصحهما: لا يجب الصوم على أهل البلد الآخر.

“If the crescent of Ramaḍān is sighted in one city but not in another, then if the two cities are near each other, they will share the same ruling. However, if they are far apart, there are two opinions—the sounder of the two is that fasting does not become obligatory on the people of the distant city.”²

The Shāfiʿī jurist Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Malībārī writes:

وإذا ثبت رؤيته ببلد، لزم حكمه البلد القريب دون البعيد، ويثبت البعد باختلاف المطالع على الأصح.

¹ Sharḥ Muslim, al-Nawawī: 7/277

² Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn: 2/348

“When the sighting of the moon is confirmed in one city, its ruling applies to nearby cities but not to distant ones, and the distance is determined - according to the soundest opinion - by the difference of horizons (*Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli*).”¹

6.3 The View of the Mālikī School

Among the *Mālikī* scholars, there is some difference of opinion on this issue; however, the majority hold that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli* (difference of horizons) is valid. Therefore, the sighting of the moon in one place does not make it binding for people in another distant location.

Imām Ibn Rushd al-Andalusī has already stated that there is consensus (*Ijmā*) among the *Mālikī* scholars on this matter:

أجمعوا على أنه لا يُراعى ذلك في البلدان النائية كالأندلس والحجاز.

“All *Mālikī* jurists are unanimous that in distant regions such as *Ḥijāz* and *al-Andalus*, the sighting in one place does not apply to the other.”²

Likewise, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī has transmitted from Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr that the *Mālikī* scholars are agreed on this point:

¹ *Fatḥ al-Mu‘īn*: 260

² *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*: 2/148

أجمعوا على أنه لا تُراعى الرؤية فيما بعد من البلاد كخراسان والأندلس.

“*Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī*” is recognised as valid. All *Mālikī* jurists are agreed that the sighting in one distant region - such as *Khurāsān* - does not apply to another, such as *al-Andalus*.¹

6.4 The Views of the Ḥanbalī and Ḥanafī Schools

The well-known view among the jurists of the *Ḥanafī* and *Ḥanbalī* schools is that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī* (difference of horizons) is not considered. According to them, if the moon is sighted anywhere in the world, it is sufficient for all - whether in the East or the West.

Indeed, such statements are found in early *Ḥanafī* works. However, an important question must be asked: when these early jurists used the terms “the entire earth,” “the world,” or “the East and West,” did they have the same geographical understanding of the globe as we do today? The answer is clearly no. At that time, even the greatest geographers and explorers regarded the inhabited world (*al-rub‘ al-maskūn*) as far smaller, since regions such as Australia and America had not yet been discovered, and many islands in the far east and west were unknown. In fact, the westernmost islands known then - *Jazā’ir Khālīdāt*

¹ Fath al-Bārī: 4/123

(the Canary Islands) - were believed to be the end of the world. The detailed maps of that era reflect this limited knowledge.¹

Thus, when early jurists referred to the East and West, they did not mean the entire globe. For instance, Imām Abū Yūsuf was called *Qāḍī al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib* (Judge of the East and West), though obviously he was not the judge of the entire world.

When *Ḥanafī* jurists stated, based on the generality of the *Ḥadīth*, that the sighting in one place suffices for all, this was never meant as a literal, global application. Practically, it is impossible. If those same scholars were alive today, they would undoubtedly revise this view, because all scholars - without exception - agree that actual visual sighting (*Ru'yah Basariyyah*) is necessary, not mere astronomical calculation.

If visual sighting is a condition, then logically, the difference of horizons must be considered. It cannot be said that a sighting in one region automatically applies to the entire world. For instance, the time difference between Australia and North America can be substantial, at times approaching seventeen hours (Sydney and Los Angeles are approximately 19 hours

¹ For further details, one may refer to *Ghiyāth al-Lughāt* under the section *Haft Iqlīm* and study the map between pages 404–405.

apart). If people in Australia were to wait for the North American report, they would be forced to make their decision around 1 p.m. the next day - deciding then whether they should have fasted that morning or celebrated 'Eīd.

Consider: In Australia, sunset may occur around 8 p.m., and no sighting is reported. If they then wait for the western regions, by the time the sun sets in North America, it will already be 1 p.m. in Australia. Should people then decide in the afternoon whether they should have fasted or celebrated 'Eīd that morning? Clearly, such a system is absurd and impractical.

Hence, it must be understood that in the time of the early jurists, the world was not as vast or interconnected as it is today. The later *Ḥanafī* jurists (*Muta'akhkhirīn*) therefore found it necessary to define and limit the range of *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli'*, recognising that in modern times it is neither logically nor practically possible for one sighting to apply globally.

Many of the later *Ḥanafī* scholars explicitly recognised *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli'* as valid, acknowledging that this distinction is essential given the present understanding of the world and the vast differences in time zones and horizons.

6.5 The Original Ḥanafī Position:

Firstly, it is important to understand that the primary Ḥanafī texts, which contain the *Ẓāhir al-Riwāyah* (the apparent narrations), are the six books authored by Imām Muḥammad رحمته الله. These books are:

1. Al-Mabsūṭ
2. Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr
3. Al-Jāmi‘ al-Kabīr
4. Al-Siyar al-Ṣaghīr
5. Al-Siyar al-Kabīr
6. Al-Ziyādāt

In these six books, the statement "لَا عِبْرَةَ لِاخْتِلَافِ الْمَطَالِعِ" ("There is no consideration for the difference in horizons") is not present. The notion that the *Ḥanafī* school, in the issue of moonsighting, does not consider the difference in horizons ("لَا عِبْرَةَ لِاخْتِلَافِ الْمَطَالِعِ") is therefore inaccurate.

Additionally, the following *Ḥanafī* texts also do not contain this phrase:

1. *Al-Mabsūṭ*, Shams al-A'imma Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī (d. 483 AH)
2. *Al-Muḥīṭ al-Raḍawī*, Raḍī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Sarakhsī (d. 571 AH)
3. *Khizānat al-Akmal*, Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf al-Jurjānī al-Ḥanafī (d. 522 AH)
4. *Mukhtaṣar al-Ḥakīm al-Shahīd*, al-Ḥakīm al-Shahīd (date unknown)
5. *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Ṭaḥāwī*, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH)
6. *Mukhtaṣar al-Qudūrī*, Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qudūrī (d. 428 AH)
7. *Tuḥfat al-Fuqahā*, 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 539 AH)
8. *Bidāyat al-Mubtadī*, 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Marghīnānī (d. 593 AH)
9. *Al-Ḥāwī al-Qudsī*, Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Maḥmūd (d. 593 AH)
10. *Al-Fiḡh al-Nāfi'*, Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Samarqandī (d. 556 AH)
11. *Al-Minhāj fī Madhhab al-Ḥanafīyyah*, Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-'Aqīlī al-Bukhārī (d. 576 AH)
12. *Jawāhir al-Fiḡh*, Ibn Ṣāḥib (date unknown)

13. *Al-Hidāyah*, Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Imād al-Dīn ibn ‘Alī al-Marghīnānī (d. 593 AH) - a manuscript collection of eight texts.

None of these sources mention the phrase :

"لا عبرة لاختلاف المطالع."

Additionally, the following texts also do not contain this phrase :

14. *Al-Wiqāyah*, ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Mas‘ūd Tāj al-Sharī‘ah (d. 747 AH)

15. *Jawāhir al-Fiqh*, Ṭāhir ibn Salām al-Khwārizmī (d. 771 AH) - available in manuscript form

16. *Al-Nuqāyah*, ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Mas‘ūd (d. 747 AH)

17. *Al-Iṣlāḥ*, Shams al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn Kamāl Bāshā (d. 940 AH) - available in manuscript form.

It is important to note that the first appearance of the phrase "لا عبرة لاختلاف المطالع" ("There is no consideration for the difference in horizons") occurs in *Fatāwā Khāniyyah* by Qāḍī Khān (d. 592 AH). Prior to this, none of the *Ḥanafī* texts contained this statement. In fact, whenever the topic was addressed, the opposite view was mentioned - يُعْتَبَرُ اخْتِلَافُ الْمَطَالِعِ ("The difference in horizons is considered").

After the publication of *Fatāwā Khāniyyah*, later scholars began quoting this phrase, and over time it became a widely held belief that the *Ḥanafī Madh-hab* does not consider the difference in horizons for moonsighting. However, this assumption is not accurate.

Consider the words of ‘Allāmah Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Manṣūr al-Uzjandī, famously known as Qāḍī Khān (d. 592 AH):

عن محمد في النوادر : إذا صام أهل مصر شهر رمضان على غير رؤية ثمانية وعشرين يوماً رأوا هلال شوال، قالوا: إن كانوا عدوا شعبان لرؤية ثلاثين يوماً، وغم عليهم هلال رمضان قضوا يوماً واحداً، وغم عليهم هلال رمضان قضوا يوماً واحداً، و إن صاموا تسعة قد أكملوا الشهر. ولو صام أهل بلدة ثلاثين يوماً للرؤية وأهل بلدة أخرى تسعة وعشرين يوماً للرؤية، فعلم من صام تسعة وعشرين يوماً فعليهم قضاء يوم ، ولا عبرة لاختلاف المطالع في ظاهر الرواية ، وكذا ذكر شمس الأئمة الحلواني رحمه الله تعالى ، وقال بعضهم : يعتبر اختلاف المطالع.¹

If we carefully examine the context of this statement, it becomes evident that the issue upon which Qāḍī Khān wrote the phrase:

ولا عبرة لاختلاف المطالع في ظاهر الرواية

¹ *Fatāwā Qāḍī Khān*, vol. 1, p. 176 (*Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah*, 2009).

“There is no consideration for the difference in horizons in *Ẓāhir al-Riwāyah*”

pertains to the category of *Nawādir* (rare or isolated narrations).

In his *Khāniyyah*, Qāḍī Khān introduces this by saying “عن محمد في النوادر” (“from Muḥammad in *Nawādir*”), which clearly indicates that this discussion is connected to the preceding topic - thus confirming that it falls under the category of *Nawādir*.

Now, consider this: if this statement truly belonged to *Ẓāhir al-Riwāyah* (the primary and most authoritative narrations of the *Ḥanafī* school), how is it that this ruling is absent from the six principal books of *Ẓāhir al-Riwāyah*, as well as from the foundational works authored to elaborate upon those six texts?

How could such an important ruling remain unknown to towering *Ḥanafī* authorities such as Imām al-Ṭahāwī, Imām al-Karakhī, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Imām al-Qudūrī, Imām al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd, Shams al-A’immah al-Sarakhsī, Imām Raḍī al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī, Imām Yūsuf ibn ‘Alī al-Jurjānī, Imām al-Samarqandī, Imām al-Kāsānī, and Imām al-Marghīnānī?

Such a notion is implausible and highly unlikely.

Below, we present the statements of Ḥanafī jurists who preceded Qāḍī Khān.

وهذا اذا كان بين البلدين تقارب بحيث لا تختلف المطالع فان كان يختلف لا يلزم
احد البلدين حكم الآخر.

1. The mentioned statement is found in the works of Imām al-Qudūrī, Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Karkhī, al-Muḥiṭ al-Burhānī, al-Fatāwā al-Tātārkhāniyyah, al-Fatāwā al-Ḥussāmiyyah, al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā, and al-Fatāwā al-Walwaljiyyah.

Imām Raḍī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Sarakhsī (d. 571 AH) states:

وهذا اذا كان بين البلدين بعد بحيث لا يختلف فيه مطالع الهلال لان الرؤية لا تتفاوت
و لا يختلف ، فيلزم احدهما حكم الآخر ، وان كان بينهما مسافة فاحشة مديدة بحيث
يختلف فيهما المطالع لم يلزم احدهما حكم الآخر.

2. “This applies when the two cities are close enough that their horizons do not differ, because the sighting (of the moon) does not vary between them - in such a case, the ruling of one applies to the other. However, if there is a great and extended distance between them such that their horizons differ, then the ruling of one does not apply to the other.”¹

¹ Al-Muḥiṭ al-Raḍawī, vol. 2, p. 50 (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah).

Imām Abul-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qudūrī (d. 428 AH) writes:

ان مطالع الهلال متفاوتة-

3. “The horizons of the crescent moon differ.”¹

Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Farghānī al-Marghīnānī (d. 593 AH) writes, referencing al-Ḥāwī:

و فى الحاوى اهل بلدة راوا الهلال يوم الثلاثاء و اهل بلدة اخرى يوم الاربعاء يحكم
لكل بلدة بما راو ، ولا ينظر الى رأى اهل بلدة اخرى، لان ابن
عباس ؓ انه سئل عن هذا فقال : لهم ما لهم و لنا ما لنا .-

4. “And in al-Ḥāwī, it is stated: if the people of one town sight the crescent on Tuesday, and the people of another town sight it on Wednesday, then each town shall act according to its own sighting and shall not rely upon the sighting of the other - because their horizons differ.”²

Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Farghānī al-Marghīnānī (d. 593 AH) states:

وهذا اشارة الى ما ذكرنا انه لا يلزمهم حكم قاضى بلدة اخرى-

¹ Al-Tajrīd by al-Qudūrī, vol. 3, p. 1467 (Dār al-Salām, Cairo).

² Al-Tajnis wa al-Mazīd, ed. Idārat al-Qur’ān wa al-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah, vol. 2, p. 421.

5. “This is an indication of what we have mentioned that the ruling of the judge of one town is not binding upon the people of another town”.¹

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Rashīd al-Kirmānī (d. 565 AH) states:

وان كان يختلف المطالع لا يلزم احدهما حكم الآخر

6. “If the horizons differ, the ruling of one is not binding upon the other.”²

Imām Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ghaznawī (d. 593 AH) has written:

هذا اذا لم يكن بين البلدين تفاوت يختلف فيه المطالع فان كانت مختلفة فيه المطالع
لم يلزم احد البلدين حكم الآخر-

7. “This applies when there is no difference between the two towns that affects the horizons; but if the horizons differ between them, the ruling of one town is not binding upon the other.”³

Imām Abdul Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Āmir Wuhayb Abū al-Faḍl al-Kirmānī (d. 543 AH) states:

¹ Ibid, 2/421

² Jawāhir al-Fatāwā: Kitāb al-Ṣawm, King Saud University (manuscript)

³ Al-Muqaddimah al-Ghaznawiyah, p. 239 (Department of Arabic Language, University of the Punjab, Lahore, 1997).

و ان كان منهما البعد ما يختلف المطالع لا يلزم ذلك-

8. “If there is such a great distance between the two locations that their horizons differ, then the ruling of one does not apply to the other.”¹

‘Allāmah ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Kāsānī (d. 587 AH) states:

ولو صام أهل بلد ثلاثين يوما وصام أهل بلد آخر تسعة وعشرين يوما فإن كان صوم أهل ذلك البلد برؤية الهلال وثبت ذلك عند قاضيهم، أو عدوا شعبان ثلاثين يوما ثم صاموا رمضان فعلى أهل البلد الآخر قضاء يوم لأنهم أفطروا يوما من رمضان لثبوت الرضائية برؤية أهل ذلك البلد، وعدم رؤية أهل البلد لا يقدح في رؤية أولئك، إذ العدم لا يعارض الوجود، وإن كان صوم أهل ذلك البلد بغير رؤية هلال رمضان أو لم تثبت الرؤية عند قاضيهم ولا عدوا شعبان ثلاثين يوما فقد أساءوا حيث تقدموا رمضان بصوم يوم. وليس على أهل البلد الآخر قضاؤه لما ذكرنا أن الشهر قد يكون ثلاثين وقد يكون تسعة وعشرين، هذا إذا كانت المسافة بين البلدين قريبة لا تختلف فيها المطالع، فأما إذا كانت بعيدة فلا يلزم أحد البلدين حكم الآخر لأن مطالع البلاد عند المسافة الفاحشة تختلف فيعتبر في أهل كل بلد مطالع بلدهم دون البلد الآخر.

9. “If the people of one town fast for thirty days while those of another fast for twenty-nine, then if the fast of the first town was based on the sighting of the

¹ Al-Īdāh fi Sharḥ al-Tajrīd — manuscript available in PDF format.

crescent and it was verified by their judge - or if they completed thirty days of Sha‘bān before beginning Ramaḍān - then the people of the other town must make up one day, because the Ramaḍān of the first town was established through actual sighting, and the absence of sighting in the other does not invalidate that, for non-existence cannot oppose existence.

However, if the people of that town fasted without sighting the crescent of Ramaḍān, or if the sighting was not confirmed by their judge, nor did they complete thirty days of Sha‘bān, then they acted wrongly by fasting a day before Ramaḍān. The people of the other town are not required to make up that day, for as we have mentioned, the lunar month may be either thirty or twenty-nine days.

This ruling applies when the distance between the two towns is close enough that their horizons do not differ. But if the distance is great, then the ruling of one town does not apply to the other, for the horizons of distant regions differ. Hence, each town should consider its own horizon and not that of another.”¹

¹ Badā‘i‘ al-Ṣanā‘i‘, vol. 2, p. 579.

Now, we will present the statements of the jurists who came after Qādī Khān.

Imām Burhān al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Bukhārī al-Ḥanafī (d. 616 AH):

وكانه مال الى ان حكم احدى البلدتين لا يلزم البلدة الاخرى اصلا او عند اختلاف
المطالع و علم ان المطالع مختلفة

1. "And it appears that he inclined to the view that the ruling of one town is not binding upon another town at all - or at least not when their horizons differ - and it is known that their horizons do indeed differ."¹

‘Allāmah Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abdul-Wāḥid, known as Ibn Humām (d. 861 AH), states:

ولا شك ان هذا اولى لانه نص، وذلك محتمل لكون المراد امر كل اهل مطلع
بالصوم لرؤيتهم -

2. "There is no doubt that this opinion is more appropriate, for it is based on explicit textual evidence. The other view is open to the interpretation that the command to fast was directed to each group of people according to their own sighting."²

¹ Al-Muḥiṭ al-Burhānī, vol. 2, p. 379 (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 2004).

² Faṭḥ al-Qadīr, Ibn Humām, vol. 2, p. 314 (Dār al-Fikr, 1970).

‘Allāmah ‘Alī ibn Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Hirawī, known as Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī (d. 1014 AH):

لأن السبب شهود الشهر ، فاذا انعقد بالرؤية في حق قوم ، لا يلزم ان ينعقد في حق غيرهم مع اختلاف المطالع ، كما لو زالت الشمس او غربت على قوم دون آخرين يجب الظهر او المغرب على الاولين دون اولئك لعدم انعقاد السبب في حقهم ، و اختار صاحب التجريد وغيره من المشايخ اعتبار اختلاف المطالع

3. “For the cause (*sabab*) of fasting is the witnessing of the month. Thus, if the month is established by sighting for one group, it does not necessarily become established for others when the horizons differ - just as when the sun sets or passes the zenith for some but not for others, *Ẓuhr* or *Maghrib* becomes obligatory for the former but not for the latter, since the cause has not occurred for them. The author of *al-Tajrīd* and other scholars have chosen the view that the difference of horizons (*Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī*) is to be considered.”¹

Zayn al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Rāzī (author of *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*) (d. after 666 AH) states:

تعدد المطالع و لا يلزم أحد المصرين رؤية المصر الآخر إلا إذا اتحدت المطالع

¹ Sharḥ al-Nuqāyah, vol. 1, p. 567 (Dār al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam, Beirut, 1997).

“The horizons (*Maṭāli*) differ, and the sighting of the moon in one city does not become binding upon another city unless their horizons are the same.”¹

This statement clearly indicates that horizons differ, and the sighting of the moon in one country is not binding for another.

‘Allāmah Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Alī al-Zayla‘ī (d. 743 AH) states:

والأشبه أن يعتبر لأن كل قوم مخاطبون بما عندهم وانفصال الهلال عن شعاع الشمس يختلف باختلاف الأقطار كما أن دخول الوقت وخروجه يختلف باختلاف الأقطار حتى إذا زالت الشمس في المشرق لا يلزم منه أن تزول في المغرب وكذا طلوع الفجر وغروب الشمس بل كلما تحركت الشمس درجة فتلك طلوع فجر لقوم وطلوع شمس لآخرين وغروب لبعض ونصف ليل لغيرهم وروي أن أبا موسى الضيرير الفقيه صاحب المختصر قدم الإسكندرية فسئل عن صعد على منارة الإسكندرية فيرى الشمس بزمان طويل بعدما غربت عندهم في البلد أيحل له أن يفطر فقال لا ويحل لأهل البلد لأن كلا مخاطب بما عنده والدليل على اعتبار المطالع ما روي عن كريب

“The sounder view is that the difference in horizons (*I’tibār al-Maṭāli*) is to be considered, because every people are addressed according to what applies to them. The separation of the crescent from the sun’s rays varies according to the regions, just as the

¹ Tuhfat al-Mulūk, p. 138 (Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyyah, Beirut, 1997).

entering and exiting of prayer times differ from place to place. When the sun passes its zenith in the east, it does not mean it has done so in the west. Similarly, the appearance of dawn and the setting of the sun differ between regions - whenever the sun moves one degree, it becomes dawn for some people, sunrise for others, sunset for some, and midnight for others.

It is narrated that Abū Mūsā al-Ḍarīr, the jurist and author of *al-Mukhtaṣar*, once travelled to Alexandria. He was asked about a person who climbed the lighthouse of Alexandria and continued to see the sun for a long time after it had already set in the city - is it permissible for him to break his fast? He replied: 'No, it is not permissible for him, but it is permissible for the people of the city, for everyone is bound by what applies to them.'

The evidence for considering the difference in horizons is the *Ḥadīth* of Kuraib."¹

‘Allāmah Ibn ‘Ābidīn al-Shāmī (d. 1252 AH) states:

اعلم أن نفس اختلاف المطالع لا نزاع فيه بمعنى أنه قد يكون بين البلدين بعد بحيث يطالع الهلال له ليلة كذا في إحدى البلدين دون الأخرى وكذا مطالع الشمس؛ لأن انفصال الهلال عن شعاع الشمس يختلف باختلاف الأفطار حتى إذا زالت الشمس في المشرق لا يلزم أن تزول في المغرب، وكذا طلوع الفجر وغروب الشمس بل كلما

¹ Tabyīn al-Ḥaqā'iq, 1/321.

تحركت الشمس درجة فتلك طلوع فجر لقوم وطلوع شمس لآخرين وغروب لبعض
ونصف ليل لغيرهم كما في الزيلعي وقدر البعد الذي تختلف فيه المطالع مسيرة شهر
فأكثر على ما في القهستاني عن الجواهر اعتبارا بقصة سليمان - عليه السلام - ،
فإنه قد انتقل كل غدو ورواح من إقليم إلى إقليم وبينهما شهر. اهـ.

ولا يخفى ما في هذا الاستدلال وفي شرح المنهاج للرملي وقد نبه التاج التبريزي على
أن اختلاف المطالع لا يمكن في أقل من أربعة وعشرين فرسخا وأفتى به الوالد والأوجه
أنها تحديدية كما أفتى به أيضا اهـ فليحفظ وإنما الخلاف في اعتبار اختلاف المطالع
بمعنى أنه هل يجب على كل قوم اعتبار مطلعهم، ولا يلزم أحد العمل بمطلع غيره أم
لا يعتبر اختلافها بل يجب العمل بالأسبق رؤية حتى لو رئي في المشرق ليلة الجمعة،
وفي المغرب ليلة السبت وجب على أهل المغرب العمل بما رآه أهل المشرق، ففيل
بالأول واعتمده الزيلعي وصاحب الفيض، وهو الصحيح عند الشافعية؛ لأن كل قوم
مخاطبون بما عندهم كما في أوقات الصلاة، وأيده في الدرر بما مر من عدم وجوب
العشاء والوتر على فاقد وقتها وظاهر الرواية الثاني وهو المعتمد عندنا وعند المالكية
والحنابلة لتعلق الخطاب عملا بمطلق الرؤية في (حديث صوموا لرؤيته) بخلاف أوقات
الصلوات، وتقام تقريره في رسالتنا المذكورة.

“Know that there is no disagreement regarding the
existence of differing horizons - meaning, it may
happen that between two cities there is such a great
distance that the crescent appears on one night in one
of them but not in the other. The same applies to the
rising points of the sun, for the separation of the
crescent from the sun’s rays varies according to
regions. When the sun passes its zenith in the east, it

does not necessarily do so in the west. Likewise, the appearance of dawn and the setting of the sun differ, for with every degree that the sun moves, it becomes dawn for some people, sunrise for others, sunset for some, and midnight for others - as al-Zayla'ī mentioned.

As for the measure of distance in which horizons differ, it is estimated as the journey of one month or more, as stated in *al-Qahistānī* quoting *al-Jawāhir*, in reference to the story of Sulaymān , who would travel each morning and evening from one region to another, the distance between which was a month's journey.

It is evident, however, that this reasoning is not absolute. In *Sharḥ al-Minhāj*, al-Ramlī noted that Tāj al-Tabrīzī mentioned that the difference of horizons cannot occur in less than twenty-four *Farsakh*, and my father also gave this ruling - the stronger view being that it is indeed a defined measure.

Now, the disagreement lies not in the existence of differing horizons but in whether such differences are to be considered. That is: must each people act according to their own horizon, such that they are not bound by the sighting of others? Or is the difference in horizons not to be considered - meaning, once the

crescent is seen in the east, it is binding upon those in the west as well?

Some have held the first view - that each region follows its own sighting - and this was adopted by al-Zayla'ī and the author of *al-Fayḍ*, and it is also the sound position among the *Shāfi'īyyah*, because every people are addressed according to what applies to them, as is the case with prayer times. *Al-Durr al-Mukhtār* also supports this view by analogy to the absence of obligation of '*Ishā'*' and *Witr* upon one who has not yet entered their times.

However, the *Zāhir al-Riwāyah* view - which is relied upon in our *Ḥanafī* school and also by the *Mālikiyyah* and *Ḥanābilah* - is that the difference of horizons is not considered, since the command is attached to the general wording of the *Ḥadīth*: 'Fast upon sighting it.' This differs from prayer times, and the complete elaboration on this issue is found in our aforementioned treatise."¹

Shaykh al-Islām Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī (d. 1369 AH) states:

"It is appropriate to consider the difference in horizons between locations where the difference in dates is typically more than one day. This is because

¹ Fatāwā al-Shāmī (2/394), printed by Sharikat Maktabat wa Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādihi, Cairo, 1966.

the texts explicitly state that the month is either 29 or 30 days long. Therefore, the testimony from a location that would result in a month being less than 29 days or more than 30 days should not be accepted.”¹

Ḥaḍrat Muḥaddith Kabīr ‘Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī (d. 1352 AH) states:

لابد من تسليم قول الزيلعي والا فيلزم وقوع العيد يوم السابع والعشرين او الثامن والعشرين او يوم الحادى والثلاثين او الثانى والثلاثين فان هلال بلاد قسطنطينية ربما يتقدم على هلالنا يومين فاذا صمنا على هلالنا ثم بلغنا رؤية هلال بلاد قسطنطينية يلزم تقديم العيد او يلزم تاخير العيد اذا صام رجل من بلاد قسطنطينية ثم جاءنا قبل العيد-

“It is necessary to accept the statement of al-Zayla‘ī; otherwise, it would lead to absurd consequences - such as celebrating ‘*Eīd* on the 27th, 28th, 31st, or even 32nd day. For the crescent of the lands of Constantinople may sometimes appear two days before our own. Thus, if we begin fasting based on our own crescent and later learn of the sighting in Constantinople, it would require us to either advance or delay ‘*Eīd*. Similarly, if someone from Constantinople, who began fasting earlier, were to come to us before ‘*Eīd*, confusion would arise.”²

¹ Faḥ al-Mulhim: 3/113.

² al-‘Arf al-Shadhī: 2/145.

‘Allāmah Yūsuf Banūrī (d. 1397 AH) states:

و حققوا وقوع الاختلاف في المطلع بنحو خمسمائة ميل.

“They have verified that the occurrence of a difference in horizons is approximately five hundred miles.”¹

‘Allāmah Zafar Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī (d. 1394 AH) states:

ولو سلم توجه الإشارة في كلام ابن عباس إلى عدم لزوم رؤية أهل بلد لأهل بلد آخر لكان عدم اللزوم مقيداً بدليل العقل، وهو أن يكون بين القطرين من البعد ما يجوز معه اختلاف المطالع

“Even if it is accepted that the statement of Ibn ‘Abbās indicates that the sighting of one region is not binding upon another, such non-obligation would be restricted by rational evidence - namely, that there must be between the two regions a distance sufficient to allow for a difference in horizons.”²

‘Allāmah ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Farangī Maḥallī Lakhnawī (d. 1304 AH) wrote in Majmū‘ah al-Fatāwā (on the margins of Khulāṣat al-Fatāwā) in Persian, which translates as follows:

"From both rational and textual perspectives, the most correct opinion is that for two cities separated by a distance sufficient to cause a difference in their

¹ Ma‘ārif al-Sunan, 5/340.

² I‘lā’ al-Sunan, 9/119.

horizons - typically measured as a month's travel distance - the sighting of the moon in one city should not be considered valid for the other. However, in the case of nearby cities with a distance of less than a month's travel between them, the sighting of the moon in one city should be considered binding and necessary for the other. This opinion is completely balanced and moderate.”¹

Shaykh al-Islām Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī (d. 1376 AH) states:

“If there is such a distance between two locations that not considering the difference would result in a discrepancy of one day or more in the date, then the difference in horizons between such locations should be considered valid. This is because the hadiths explicitly state that the month is no less than 29 days and no more than 30 days.”²

Mufti Rashīd Ṣāhib (d. 1422 AH) quoted ‘Allāmah Bānūrī رحمته الله as writing: “In distant lands, the consideration of the difference in horizons is a matter of consensus (*Ijmāʿ*).”

كما صرح به ابن عبد البر وغيره، بداية المجتهد لابن رشد، فتح الباری لابن حجر

¹ Jadīd Fiqhī Masāʾil, 2/21.

² Maʾārif Madaniyyah, 10/17 - extracted from Anwār-e-Raḥmat, p. 551.

“As explicitly stated by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and others - *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid* by Ibn Rushd; *Fatḥ al-Bārī* by Ibn Ḥajar)”.¹

Mufti Shafi‘ Ṣāhib (d. 1395 AH) states in his treatise on moonsighting in great detail and mentioned that both Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī رحمہ اللہ and Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī رحمہ اللہ held the same opinion - that the difference in horizons must be acknowledged:

“In distant lands, this should be considered. Esteemed Ḥanafī jurists, whose eminent status among the Ḥanafī scholars is well established, have given preference to this view.”²

6.6 The Views of the Later Ḥanafī Jurists

The Opinion of ‘Allāmah Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Alī al-Zayla‘ī:

He states:

“The most appropriate opinion is that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī* (difference of horizons) should be taken into account, because every community is addressed in accordance with what applies to them. The separation of the crescent from the rays of the sun differs across various regions, just as the beginning and end of

¹ Aḥsanul-Fatāwā, 4/484.

² Risālah Ru’yat Hilāl, pp. 22–23.

prayer times vary from place to place. When the sun passes its zenith in the East, it does not mean it has done so in the West. The same applies to the rising of dawn and the setting of the sun. In fact, whenever the sun moves one degree upward, it signifies dawn for one region, sunrise for another, sunset for some, and midnight for others.

It is narrated that Abū Mūsā al-Ḍarīr, the jurist and author of *al-Mukhtaṣar*, once arrived in Alexandria and was asked about a man who climbed the lighthouse and could still see the sun, although for the people below it had already set. Was it permissible for him to break his fast? He replied: “It is permissible for the people of the town below to break their fast, but not for the man on the lighthouse, because each person is bound by the ruling applicable to his own situation.” The evidence for considering *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāliʿ* is found in the narration of Ḥaḍrat Kuraib رحمته الله.¹

ʿAllāmah al-Zaylaʿī holds an eminent position among the *Ḥanafī* jurists. Besides him, many other distinguished *Ḥanafī* scholars have also affirmed that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāliʿ* is valid and must be recognised.

¹ Tabyīn al-Ḥaqāʾiq: 1/321.

The Opinion of ‘Allāmah ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Kāsānī

The scholarly stature of ‘Allāmah al-Kāsānī is well known to every student of Islamic law. He writes:

“If the people of one city fast for thirty days, while the people of another city fast for twenty-nine, then if the fasting of the first city was based on confirmed *Ru’yat al-Hilal* and it was validated by their judge, or they completed thirty days of Sha‘bān and then began Ramaḍān, the people of the second city must make up one missed fast, because they broke the fast of one day of Ramaḍān which had already commenced through the confirmed sighting in the first city. The fact that the moon was not sighted in the second city does not invalidate the sighting of the first, since non-existence cannot contradict existence.

However, if the fasting of the first city was without a valid *Ruyat al-Hilal*, or it was not established before their judge, nor did they complete thirty days of Sha‘bān, then they erred by fasting a day prior to Ramaḍān. The people of the other city are not required to make up that day, since the month can be either thirty or twenty-nine days.

This ruling applies only when the two cities are close enough that their horizons do not differ. But if the distance between them is large, then one city is not bound by the ruling of the other, because distant lands

have different horizons. Therefore, each city should follow the *Matla'* (horizon) of its own location, not that of another.¹

Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī ,

Also acknowledges the validity of *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli'*, as he writes:

“Since the cause (*Sabab*) of fasting is the witnessing of the month, if it is established through sighting for a certain group of people, it is not necessary that it be established for others who have a different horizon. Just as when the sun declines or sets for one group, *Ẓuhr* or *Maghrib* becomes obligatory upon them and not upon others, because the cause has not yet occurred for those others. The author of *al-Tajrīd* and other scholars have also chosen this view - that the difference of horizons (*Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli'*) must be taken into consideration.”²

Shāh Walī Allāh al-Muḥaddith al-Dihlawī  also held that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli'* (difference of horizons) is valid and should be considered.

For detailed discussion, see the following authorities.³

¹ Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i': 2/579.

² Sharḥ al-Niqāyah: 1.

³ Al-Muṣaffā Sharḥ al-Muwatta': 1/286–287.

1. Ṣāhib al-Qudūrī writes:

“When two cities are close enough that their horizons do not differ, the ruling of one will apply to the other. But if they are so far apart that their horizons differ, then the ruling of one city does not apply to the other.”¹

2. ‘Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī ﷺ writes:

“It is appropriate that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī* be considered between locations where the difference of dates exceeds one day, for the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* explicitly state that a lunar month is either twenty-nine or thirty days. Hence, any testimony that would lead to a month shorter than twenty-nine or longer than thirty days should not be acted upon.”²

According to him, sighting in Ḥijāz, Egypt, or Syria does not necessitate sighting in Australia, because the lunar date there is usually a day ahead or behind.

3. ‘Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī ﷺ supports al-Zayla‘ī’s view, stating:

“The statement of al-Zayla‘ī must necessarily be accepted; otherwise, it would lead to absurd consequences such as celebrating ‘*Ēid* on the 27th,

¹ Al-Fatāwā al-Tātārkhāniyyah: 3/365.

² Fath al-Mulhim: 3/113.

28th, 31st, or even 32nd day. This is because, at times, the crescent in the regions of Constantinople appears two days earlier than it does in our region. Thus, if we begin fasting according to our own sighting, and afterward news reaches us that the crescent had been sighted in Constantinople, then we would have to celebrate *‘Eīd* two days earlier. Similarly, if a person from Constantinople, who began fasting according to his local sighting, were to arrive here before *‘Eīd*, he would end up fasting 31 or even 32 days if he followed our calendar.”¹

4. ‘Allāmah Yūsuf al-Binnūrī  writes:

“Scholars have established through research that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī*’ becomes valid for places approximately 500 km apart.”²

5. ‘Allāmah Ṣāfir Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī  states:

“If the *Ḥadīth* of Ibn ‘Abbās  indicates that one region’s sighting is not binding upon another, it must be understood rationally - that the two regions are far enough apart for their horizons to differ.”³

6. ‘Allāmah ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Farangī Maḥallī  writes in *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*:

¹ Al-‘Urf al-Shadhī: 2/145.

² Ma‘ārif al-Sunan: 5/340.

³ I‘lā’ al-Sunan: 9/119.

“The most balanced and correct view, rationally and textually, is that if two cities are so far apart that their horizons differ - approximately a month’s journey - one city’s sighting is not valid for the other. But in nearby locations within that distance, one sighting applies to both.”¹

7. Shaykh al-Islām Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī  also maintained that if the distance between two locations causes a difference of a full day or more, *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* should be recognised, since a lunar month is strictly twenty-nine or thirty days.²

8. Mufti Rashīd Aḥmad  quotes ‘Allāmah Binnūrī :

“In distant lands, recognising *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* is a matter of consensus, as stated by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and others. Among *Ḥanafīs*, it is also determined and accepted.”³

9. Mufti Muḥammad Shafī‘  writes:

“The question of *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* arises because the sun and moon are always present, but their visibility differs across regions - one place may be at dawn while another at dusk. The debate among scholars is not about whether horizons differ (that’s a given), but

¹ Jadīd Fiqhī Masā’il: 2/21.

² Ma‘ārif Madaniyyah: 10/17, derived from Anwār Raḥmat: 551.

³ Aḥsan al-Fatāwā: 4/484.

whether that difference should affect legal rulings. The jurists fall into three categories:

1. Those who always consider *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāliʿ*.
2. Those who never consider it.
3. Those who consider it for distant regions but not for nearby ones.”¹

He then explains that the last view - distinguishing between *Bilād Qarībah* (nearby) and *Bilād Baʿīdah* (distant) - is the most balanced, since ignoring the difference in distant regions could lead to months shorter than 29 days or longer than 30, which contradicts explicit Qurʾānic and *Ḥadīth* texts.

Mufti Shafīʿ concludes:

“In modern times, with air travel connecting the East and West within hours, the practical reality of global communication makes the consideration of *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāliʿ* even more essential. For regions where the difference in sighting could alter the number of days in a month, recognising *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāliʿ* is both necessary and consistent with the *Ḥanafī* school.”²

¹ Risālah Ruʾyat al-Hilāl: 22–23.

² Ibid.

Dārul-‘Ulūm Deoband Fatwā (Jawāb No. 67427):

According to the view of the later verifying scholars, the sound and preferred (*Muftā Bihī*) position is that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* (difference of horizons) in distant lands (*Mamālik Ba‘īdah*) is real and legally valid.¹

Binori Town Fatwā:

“Among the senior scholars of Deoband, such as Mawlānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, Mawlānā Shabbīr Ahmad ‘Uthmānī, Mawlānā Muftī Muḥammad Shafi‘, and Mawlānā Muḥammad Yūsuf Binori (may Allāh have mercy on them all), *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* is considered valid, and this is the view upon which the *Fatwā* (legal verdict) is issued.”²

Jāmi‘ah Farūqiyyah Fatwā:

“It is clearly stated that the rulings related to fasting and ‘*Eīd* depend upon *Ru‘yat al-Hilāl* (sighting of the moon). The people of the region where the moon is sighted will be bound by the rulings that follow from it, while those in regions where sighting has not been established are not bound by the horizon of another country. Every region has its own independent horizon, due to which it often happens that the moon

¹ Fatwā ID: 1113-1094/N-10/1437.

² Fatwā No: 144012201124 – Jāmi‘ah ‘Ulūm Islāmiyyah, ‘Allāmah Muḥammad Yūsuf Binori Town.

becomes visible in one place but its effects or appearance are not observable in another. (A detailed *Fatwā* with strong evidences has been written on this topic.”¹

Jāmi‘ah Dārul-‘Ulūm Karachi Fatwā:

In *Fatwā No. 711*, dated 18/8/1431 AH, Dārul-‘Ulūm Karachi has also clearly written in detail that *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* in distant lands is valid, and that Saudi Arabia falls under the category of distant regions (*Bilād Ba‘īdah*).“

From the statements of these senior scholars, it is evident that despite being from the *Ḥanafī* school, they regarded *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* as valid. Hence, it is clear that according to the later *Ḥanafī* jurists, *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* is considered valid.

Maulana Khalid Saifullah Raḥmani writes:

In the session of *Majlis Taḥqīqāt Shar‘iyyah*, Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’, Lucknow, held on 3–4 May 1967, scholars and representatives from various schools of thought collectively reached the following conclusions regarding this issue:

1. The reality is that the entire world does not share a single horizon; the difference of horizons (*Ikhtilāf*

¹ Fatwā Jāmi‘ah Farūqiyyah: 91/346, dated 6/9/1431 AH

al-*Maṭāli'*) is real and valid. This is a matter of observable fact, not of juristic disagreement, and it is also supported by *Ḥadīth*.

2. However, the jurists differ on whether this difference of horizons is to be considered in matters of fasting and breaking the fast. According to the investigating scholars among the *Ḥanafīs* and the statements and evidences of the scholars of the ummah, the *Majlis* unanimously decided that for distant regions (*Bilād Ba'īdah*), the difference of horizons is also valid in this matter.
3. *Bilād Ba'īdah* refers to regions so far apart that there is normally a difference of one full day between their moon sightings - meaning that the crescent is seen in one region a day earlier than in another. If the sighting in one of these regions were made binding on the other, it would result in some places having months of 28 days and others of 31 days. This view is supported by the narration of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās .
4. *Bilād Qarībah* (nearby regions) are those in which, as a general rule, no one-day difference in sighting occurs. Jurists have defined *Bilād Ba'īdah* as regions separated by a distance of approximately one month's travel - around 500 to 600 miles - and anything less is considered *Bilād Qarībah*. The

Majlis also recognised the need for a chart that would indicate at what distance the horizon changes, and which countries share the same horizon.

5. Most parts of India and Pakistan, as well as nearby countries like Nepal, share a common horizon. The scholars of the Indian subcontinent have always acted accordingly, and experience also supports that these regions do not have such a great distance between them that would cause a one-day difference in lunar dates. Therefore, if the moon is sighted anywhere within these regions and its sighting is legally verified, accepting it becomes obligatory upon all people within these lands.
6. As for countries like Egypt and the Ḥijāz, their horizons are entirely different from that of the Indian subcontinent. Hence, their sighting is not binding or acceptable for India and Pakistan in any circumstance, nor is the reverse acceptable, because there is usually at least a one-day difference between them, and sometimes even more.¹

¹ Jadīd Fiqhī Masā'il: 2/22

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah writes in his *Fatāwā*:

“Moonsighting differs according to east and west. When the moon is seen in the east, it must necessarily be visible in the west, because sunset occurs later in the west than in the east. Therefore, if it has been sighted in the east, it will have moved further away from the sun and become brighter by the time the sun sets in the west, making it even more visible there. However, the reverse is not true - if it is sighted in the west, it is not necessary that it should have been seen in the east. This is because, in the west, the sun sets later, and thus the moon becomes further from the sun and brighter; whereas, in the east, at the time of sunset, the moon remains closer to the sun.”¹

‘Allāmah ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Ḥumayd, the former Chief *Qāḍī* of Makkah, writes in his treatise:

“The times of sunset differ from one region to another, and similarly, the difference of horizons has a significant impact on moonsighting. The reason is that when, in eastern regions, the moon is still hidden within the sun’s glare, both the sun and moon continue moving westward. By the time the sun reaches the horizon in the western regions, the moon would have moved further out of the sun’s brightness, making it visible to them. Hence, the moon may be

¹ Tibyān al-Adillah fī Ithbāt al-Ahillah: 414.

sighted in the west on that day, while it remains unseen in the east.”

The purpose of discussing these various points about *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘* is to establish that this difference of horizons is valid and recognised. Therefore, every country should rely on its own local horizon for moonsighting.

6.7 Making the sighting of the moon in Makkah Mukarramah the central reference

First, I quote the statement of Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz ibn Bāz. The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz ibn Bāz, clarified in one of his articles that the sighting of the moon cannot be the same throughout the entire world. He further explained that it is incorrect to designate Makkah Mukarramah as the central reference point for moonsighting for all Muslims across the globe. He writes:

“The issue of differing moon sightings is one in which the scholars have expressed varying opinions. After discussion within the *Fatwā* Council, the view that has been deemed strongest is that every country should rely on its own local sighting of the moon. Therefore, in such matters, people should refer to their local scholars for guidance.”

At the end of this article, he writes:

“Some people hold the view that the determination of Ramaḍān and ‘Eīd should be based on the moonsighting in Makkah Mukarramah for the entire world. However, there is absolutely no evidence for this in the pure *Shari‘ah*, nor does it have any basis.”¹

The moonsighting system in Saudi Arabia has long been a topic of discussion and analysis among scholars. It is a well-known fact that the day and time when moonsighting is officially declared in Saudi Arabia often contradict clear astronomical principles.

Some people mistakenly assume that Saudi Arabia’s announcements for Ramaḍān and ‘Eīd are based on actual sightings of the crescent moon. A simple inquiry to any observatory would clarify whether it was even possible to see the moon on the dates announced - whether the moon was above or below the horizon at that time.

For example, in 1412 AH (1992 CE), the official Saudi announcement declared the first day of Ramaḍān to be on March 4, 1992, implying that the moon had been sighted on March 3, 1992. However, astronomical data show that the new moon occurred at 4:22 PM Saudi Standard Time on March 4, 1992 -

¹ Al-Baḥṭh al-Islāmī, Dhul-Hijjah 1399 AH.

meaning the moon did not even exist above the horizon on March 3. Any observatory in the world would confirm that sighting was impossible that evening. If the Saudi sighting were genuine, it should also have been visible in all neighboring regions - yet it was not seen even the following day.

To illustrate this, consider the following four days on which the start of Ramaḍān in 1412 AH (1992 CE) was claimed based on moonsighting:

1. Saudi Arabia claimed moonsighting on March 3, 1992 - approximately 22 hours before the new moon. Based on this claim, Ramaḍān began on March 4, 1992, in Saudi Arabia, and this announcement was followed by some parts of the USA and Europe.
2. Egypt claimed moonsighting on March 4, 1992, which was 2 hours and 34 minutes after the new moon. In Egypt, Ramaḍān began on March 5, 1992, as the moon was above the horizon 2 hours and 5 minutes later.
3. Morocco, some European countries, Pakistan, and certain African nations reported moonsighting on March 5, 1992, which occurred after the new moon. Ramaḍān therefore began on March 6, 1992, in these regions.

4. India, Bangladesh, Réunion, Mauritius, and New Zealand claimed moonsighting on March 6, 1992, and accordingly began Ramaḍān on March 7, 1992.

In total, these countries reported moon sightings on four separate days.

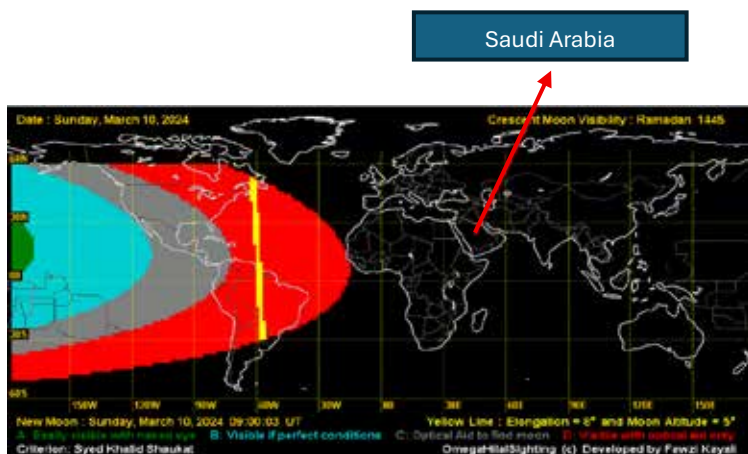
This raises a crucial question: How can such claims be verified or refuted? Should the determination be based solely on astronomical evidence, or is there a legal (*Sharʿī*) or jurisprudential (*Fiqhī*) foundation to guide acceptance or rejection of such reports?

Furthermore, if all claims are considered valid, should each nation adhere to its own local sighting - taking into account the difference in horizons (*Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālīʿ*) - or should the earliest sighting take precedence, requiring others to compensate for missed fasts?

Finally, is it even scientifically and logically possible for the moon to be sighted on three or four consecutive days in different parts of the world - or for it to appear in one location, then disappear and reappear in another after 24 hours?

Looking at the recent example of *ʿĒd al-Aḍḥā* in 2024, the moon was visible for only three hours, yet this brief window resulted in three separate *ʿĒd* celebrations across Australia.

To better understand the discrepancies, Dr. Khalid Shaukat's moon visibility map for the beginning of Ramaḍān on March 10, 2024, in Saudi Arabia serves as a useful reference. The map illustrates the regions where the moon could theoretically be seen versus where it was astronomically impossible to sight it - highlighting how official announcements often contradict observable and scientific data.



The following table illustrates examples of Saudi moon sightings from 1992–1993:

Islamic Month	Date of New Moon	Umm al-Qura Calendar	Difference between Sunset & Moonset in Makkah	Moonsighting Possibility Calendar
Muḥarram 1413 AH	June 30, 1992	July 1, 1992	+3 minutes	July 2, 1992
Şafar	July 29, 1992	July 30, 1992	–20 minutes	August 1, 1992
Rabī' al-Awwal	August 28, 1992	August 29, 1992	+6 minutes	August 30, 1992
Rabī' al-Thānī	September 26, 1992	September 27, 1992	–11 minutes	September 29, 1992
Jumādal-Ūlā	October 25, 1992	October 26, 1992	–28 minutes	October 28, 1992
Jumādal-Thānīyah	November 24, 1992	November 25, 1992	+3 minutes	November 26, 1992
Rajab	December 24, 1992	December 25, 1992	+19 minutes	December 26, 1992
Sha'bān	January 22, 1993	January 23, 1993	–9 minutes	January 24, 1993
Ramaḍān	February 21, 1993	February 22, 1993	Both together	February 23, 1993
Shawwāl	March 23, 1993	March 24, 1993	+8 minutes	March 25, 1993
Dhūl-Qa'dah	April 21, 1993	April 22, 1993	–21 minutes	April 24, 1993
Dhūl-Hijjah 1413 AH	May 21, 1993	May 22, 1993	Both together	May 23, 1993

1. Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn states:

وعلى هذا فإذا ثبت الهلال في السعودية لم يلزمكم حكمه إلا أن تروه أو يراه من كان قريباً منكم، بحيث يوافقكم في المطالع

“Accordingly, if the moon is sighted in Saudi Arabia, its ruling does not become binding upon you unless you sight it yourselves or it is sighted by those who are near you and share the same horizon.”¹

2. Fatwā from Binori Town:

When the distance between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia exceeds 500 miles, making them distant lands, and Pakistan has its own official moonsighting committee responsible for observing and announcing the moon for Ramaḍān and ‘Eīd, it is not correct to rely on Saudi Arabia’s moonsighting for Pakistan.²

Fatwā Number: 144112201200

3. Fatwā from Dārul-‘Ulūm Deoband:

There is a long distance between Saudi Arabia and Australia. In countries with such long distances, it is not correct to consider the moonsighting from one place as valid for another place.³

¹ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā: 58/19

² Dār al-Iftā’: Jāmi‘ah ‘Ulūm Islāmiyyah, ‘Allāmah Muḥammad Yūsuf Binori Town.

³ Dār al-Iftā’, Dārul-‘Ulūm Deoband - Fatwā No. 605813

4. Fatwā from Dār al-Iftā', Jāmi'ah 'Uthmāniyyah Peshāwar:

“In the given situation, those residing in Pakistan must determine *‘Eīd* and *Qurbānī* according to their local moonsighting. It is not permissible for anyone to individually follow the Saudi moonsighting or astronomical calculations for *‘Eīd* and *Qurbānī*, and such sacrifices will not fulfill their obligation.”¹

5. Statement by Mufti Rashid Aḥmad:

“The Saudi government’s moonsighting decision not only contradicts the Ḥanafī school but also the apparent observations, therefore it is not binding for people in Pakistan.”²

6.8 The Entire Country Shares One Horizon

An objection is sometimes raised that the people of Sydney should only consider their own local sighting and not rely on sightings from Perth, Darwin, or Alice Springs. The answer is that the jurists have clearly stated that an entire country is regarded as having one single horizon.

¹ Fatwā No. 8710/297/321

² Aḥsan al-Fatāwā: 4/624

‘Allāmah Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī رحمته الله, while discussing *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭāli‘*, quoted the statement of ‘Allāmah Ibn al-Mājjishūn:

“Those in whose city the moonsighting is established are obligated to act upon it. However, if the sighting is confirmed before the supreme ruler (*Imām al-A‘ẓam*), then the ruling applies to all people within his dominion, no matter how vast, because in his jurisdiction, all territories are considered as one city since his command is effective throughout.”¹

‘Allāmah al-Shawkānī expressed a similar view.²

Today, this principle is commonly implemented: regardless of how vast a country may be, it is regarded as one unified horizon. For instance, the distance between Riyadh and Makkah al-Mukarramah is approximately 940 kilometres, yet the sighting in Riyadh is accepted for Makkah and vice versa. Likewise, the sighting in Karachi (Pakistan) is accepted for Peshawar, and Peshawar’s sighting for Karachi; the same applies between Delhi and Kolkata in India.

Similarly, in Australia, the sighting in Sydney is valid for the other cities, and their sighting is valid for Sydney. This is the practice we follow.

¹ Fath al-Bārī: 4/123

² Nayl al-Awṭār: 798

7 - Issue of Regional Sighting

In recent times, the issue of whether Australia should accept the moonsighting of neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia has become highly debated.

In 2002, a discussion took place at my home in the presence of Hazrat Muftī Taqī ‘Uthmānī. A few scholars were also present at that time, and Hazrat wrote that if the *Ru’yah* (sighting) in neighbouring countries is possible, then there is no harm in accepting their sighting in order to reduce differences. The key point, however, is that this acceptance should only occur if the sighting is possible; if the sighting is not possible, it should not be accepted.

Hazrat’s visit to Brisbane was by invitation from the local community, and he graciously visited Sydney as well, honouring us with his company and valuable time. Several discussions took place on various topics, and among them, one companion raised the topic of *Ru’yat al-Hilāl* incidentally. His visit to Sydney was not specifically for the discussion of moonsighting; otherwise, a large gathering of scholars - especially those who adhere to the *Sunnah* of *Ru’yat al-Hilāl* - would have been formally invited.

At that time, there was a council known as *Majlis al-'Ulamā' of Australia*, consisting of scholars from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and the Arab world, who collectively followed the *Sunnah* of *Ru'yat al-Hilāl*. They unanimously agreed to rely solely on Australia's local sighting and not on that of neighbouring countries. I found it appropriate to present Hazrat's suggestion before this *Majlis*, but all members declined, stating that the cautious and correct approach is to depend exclusively on Australia's sighting.

There were several reasons behind this stance, and since all the scholars were united on this decision, what could one person like Shabbir Ahmed possibly do? This position has remained consistent to this day.

Currently, more than one hundred and fifty scholars - spanning from Brisbane to Perth - are united under an official Moonsighting Committee, which has, for many years, organised systematic monthly observations of the crescent moon. *Alḥamdulillāh*, this work continues with unity and harmony.

However, in recent years, some individuals - who for many years rejected the *Sunnah* of *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* and instead relied solely on astronomical calculations for the start of Ramaḍān and 'Eīd - have now begun quoting a suggestion made by *Hazrat Mawlānā Taqī*

‘*Uthmānī* nearly eighteen years ago, arguing that Australia should accept the moonsighting of neighbouring countries.

Interestingly, these very individuals selectively accept neighbouring countries’ sightings in some months and reject them in others. We have records showing that on certain occasions, Indonesia announced the beginning of fasting or ‘*Ēīd*, yet these individuals did not accept it.

Accepting sightings from regional countries raises two issues:

Firstly, the term "Neighbouring Countries" is vague - does it include Malaysia, Thailand, or China?

Secondly, filtering sighting reports becomes increasingly difficult with a larger region. Past experiences show unreliable reports from neighbouring countries that cannot be verified, complicating the process.

Another issue with regional sighting, particularly in following Malaysia, is that Malaysia follows a combined *Ru’yah* (sighting) and *Ḥisāb* (calculation) methodology, using criteria of 3 degrees altitude and 6.4 degrees elongation. On the 29th of each Hijri month, an official moonsighting is conducted. If the moon is sighted, the new Hijri month is declared.

However, if the moon is not sighted but meets the predetermined criteria, it is considered sighted but obscured by clouds. This criterion is applied for nine months of the year. However, for the months of Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhul Hijjah, the final decision rests with the keeper of the seals.¹

For many years, I have personally maintained detailed records showing that the criteria adopted by some regional countries do not align with the criteria we follow here in Australia. There have been numerous instances where the moon had not yet been born, or even when it was, it was only one or two degrees above the horizon - yet official announcements of sighting were made.

In contrast, local individuals in those countries, who make great efforts to observe the crescent and gather in large numbers for actual visual sighting, often report that they did not see the moon. Despite this, the government authorities go ahead and officially declare that the moon has been sighted.

I would like to present a few reservations here:

¹ Mohd Saiful Anwar Mohd Nawawi, Muhamad Syazwan Faiz, Mohd Hafiz Mohd Saadon, Raihana Abdul Wahab, Nazhatulshima Ahmad, *Hijri Month Determination in Southeast Asia: An Illustration Between Religion, Science, and Cultural Background*.

1. We share the same time zone with our neighbouring countries. Between Perth and Indonesia or Malaysia, the time difference is barely one or two minutes.

Note: Based on this same time zone, if the moon is visible in Australia, it will also be visible in Indonesia and Malaysia - and if it is not visible in Australia, it will likewise not be visible there. Therefore, it is irrational for us to depend on neighbouring countries when we are certain that, due to being in the same time zone, there is virtually no difference in the moon's age or its elongation - perhaps not even by a single degree.

2. For several years, we have observed that neighbouring countries do not strictly follow actual visual sighting.
3. Even if we were to establish a committee there to keep us informed of their sighting and announce that we rely on their testimony - if their observers fail to see the moon, yet their government officially declares its sighting - what will we tell our people? If we say that our representatives did not see the moon, people will ask, "Are you implying that the neighbouring government is lying or disbelieving?"

This is precisely why scholars who uphold the *Sunnah* method of *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* unanimously say: How can we rely on neighbouring countries under such conditions?

This is not a matter of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence); it is an issue of reliability and credibility.

4. Even if we were to accept the sighting of neighbouring countries, those who follow astronomical calculations would still not join us. They determine the dates of Ramaḍān and 'Ed months in advance, regardless of actual sighting.

Hence, the very purpose of unity would still not be achieved.

I have discussed this issue several times with like-minded scholars, but all of them firmly maintain that we will not go beyond Australia for moonsighting.

6. If we begin relying on external countries, the unity among those who adhere to the *Sunnah* method of *Ru'yat al-Hilāl* will be broken.
7. As I have already mentioned in the discussion on *Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī'*, according to the later *Ḥanafī* jurists who recognise the validity of differing horizons, a distance of 600-700 kilometres is considered within *Bilād Qarībah* (nearby regions). Anything beyond that is classified as *Bilād Ba'īdah*

(distant regions). Since the distance between Perth and Indonesia exceeds 2000 kilometres, we cannot, from a juristic standpoint, accept Indonesia's sighting.

Scholars of astronomy have explained in detail that at the time of sunset, the moon's age must be more than 20 hours, and the angular distance between the moon and the sun should be at least 10 degrees. If it reaches 12 degrees, the crescent can be seen easily, provided the sky is clear. Based on over 32 years of observation, whenever the moon's age exceeds 20 hours and its distance from the sun is over 10 degrees, the crescent is visible under clear conditions.

The following examples highlight this problem:

- Shawwāl 1435 (27 July 2014):

The moon's age was only 8 hours with a 3° separation between the sun and moon - making visibility impossible across almost the entire world, including Indonesia and Australia, both located in the black zone (no-visibility region). Yet, Indonesia officially declared the sighting.

- Shawwāl 1436 (16 July 2015):

Despite reports from observatories confirming no sighting, Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs announced the start of Shawwāl. The moon's age was

less than 6 hours, and it was not seen anywhere, from Japan to the United States.

- Ramaḍān 1437 (5 June 2016):

The moon's age was less than 4 hours - astronomically impossible for visibility - yet a sighting was officially declared in Indonesia. Even trained observatories confirmed they did not see the moon.

- Shawwāl 1438 (24 June 2017):

The moon was under 5 hours old, but an official announcement of sighting was made, although local observers reported cloudy skies and no visibility.

- Ramaḍān 1441 (23 April 2020):

The moon's age was under 7 hours, and multiple observatories confirmed no sighting across Indonesia, yet the government still declared the beginning of Ramaḍān.

Across these years, the pattern is clear: In each case, scientific data and verified reports contradicted the official government declarations of sighting. The crescent was not visible even under ideal conditions, and Australia - sharing the same visibility zone - was also in regions where sighting was astronomically impossible.

Even if one argues for regional sighting, how can such a system be credible if it must exclude Indonesia - the world's largest Muslim population - due to unreliable reports? Once a country of that scale is excluded, the very concept of "regional sighting" collapses in practice.

For these reasons, limiting moonsighting to Australia is more logical and practical, as adopted by major Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Morocco.

Historically, this approach aligns with the practice of following the decision of the local Imām or governor within political boundaries. In countries without an Imām, scholars take on this role.

The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz bin Bāz, explicitly stated that the horizons of the entire world can never be unified. He affirmed that using Makkah as the global reference point for moonsighting has no basis in *Shari‘ah*. Following discussions at *Dār al-Iftā’*, the majority of scholars agreed that local moonsighting, accounting for differences in horizons, should be adopted.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah also explained that during the time of the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi‘īn*, moonsightings varied naturally between regions. Despite this, there is no evidence that people were

required to retroactively fast or unify their dates. This demonstrates that differences in horizons were accepted without causing disputes. These perspectives affirm that local moonsighting is a practical and authentic approach rooted in the *Sunnah* and early Islamic tradition.

8 - Misconceptions About the 2nd Day Moon

It is extremely unfortunate that even educated people today, when speaking without knowledge, say things like: “Look how fat and big the moon is-it must be the second or third day”. They possess neither knowledge of *Ḥadīth* nor of science, yet they themselves are misguided and are misleading others.

There are more than forty *Aḥādīth* in the collections of *Ḥadīth* stating: “See the moon and begin fasting, and see the moon and celebrate ‘Eīd.” We should adhere to the instruction of the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ regarding the sighting of the moon. In any case, the entire evening of the 29th should be carefully observed. In Australia, when the moon is not seen, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ is followed by completing the lunar month as thirty days.

Keep in mind that the moon appears thicker and larger on the 30th of the month. The reason for this is that the moon’s age increases by approximately 24 hours each day. For instance, after the 29th of a lunar month has passed, the new moon does appear on the horizon immediately after sunset. However, if its altitude is around four to five degrees, its age is eighteen hours, and it remains visible on the horizon

for only fifteen to twenty minutes, then although the moon is technically present, there is no possibility of sighting it. In such a case, the lunar month will be completed as thirty days.

By the next evening, the age of that same moon will be forty-two hours, its altitude on the horizon will reach twelve degrees or more, and it will remain visible for a longer period-such as one hour-and it will appear larger. Nevertheless, it will still most certainly be the moon of the first night.

In this matter, the foundation in *Ḥadīth* and Islamic law is that the ruling of the new month is based on *Ru'yah* (actual sighting). It is not based on whether the moon appears small or large, or on its *Qurb* or *Bu'd* (apparent distance). The core principle is simply visibility.

Our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ foretold this: Shu'bah narrates that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

“From among the signs of the Hour is that the moon will appear large.” At times, the new moon will be seen during the night, and people will say: “It is the moon of the second night”.¹

¹ Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah: 37553

Imām Ṭabarānī reports in *al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ*: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

"From among the signs of the Hour is the swelling of the crescents, and that the new moon will be seen at night and it will be said: it is for two nights".¹

That is, one of the signs of *Qiyāmah* is that the new moon will appear full and clear, and due to its clarity and obviousness without any effort or search, it will be sighted instantly and people will say, "This moon is two nights old!" Whereas in reality, it is the moon of the very night it was sighted.

Imām Ṭabarānī also narrates in *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr a Ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) *Ḥadīth*:

"From among the signs of the Hour is the swelling of the crescent moons, and that the new moon will be seen at night and people will say: it is for two nights".²

This is also a sign of the approaching Hour-the new moon will appear full and large, and once again people will claim that it belongs to the previous night.

Imām Muslim, in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, dedicated a chapter specifically to this issue of the moon appearing fat or thin. He clarified that the crescent's size carries no

¹ Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ*: 9/147

² Al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*: 10/198

legal weight when determining the start of a month.
The title of the chapter is:

بَابُ بَيَانِ أَنَّهُ لَا اعْتِبَارَ بِكِبَرِ الْهِلَالِ وَصِغَرِهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى أَمَدُهُ لِلرُّؤْيَةِ
فَإِنْ غُمَّ فَلْيُكْمَلْ ثَلَاثُونَ

"Chapter: Clarifying that it does not matter whether the crescent is large or small, for Allāh, the Most High, causes it to appear for sighting, and if it is obscured, then complete thirty days."

In this chapter, he narrates:

Abū al-Bakhtarī reported: "We saw the new moon of Ramaḍān while we were at *Dhāt 'Irq*. We sent a man to Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه to ask whether the sighting of a small crescent had any defect in it. Ibn 'Abbās replied that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: Verily, Allāh deferred its sighting, and if it is hidden from you, then complete it as thirty (days)".

A similar narration appears in *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, also transmitted by Imām Muslim:

Abū al-Bakhtarī said: "We went out to perform 'Umrah, and when we camped in the valley of *Nakhla*, we tried to sight the new moon. Some people said it was three nights old, while others said it was two nights old. We later met Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and told him what had happened. He asked which night we had

seen it. When we told him, he said: ‘The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ deferred it until it is seen, so the count begins from the night it was seen’.¹

To conclude, in matters of moonsighting, we must adhere strictly to the clear guidance of the Prophet ﷺ: the start and end of the lunar month are based solely on actual sighting (*Ru'yah*), not the moon’s size, shape, or apparent age. Mistaken assumptions - such as judging the date by how “big” the moon looks - contradict both scientific understanding and the teachings of our *Dīn*.

¹ Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ 1981

9 - The Fast of Yawm al-Shakk (29th of Sha‘bān)

Some people say that since there is uncertainty on the 30th of Sha‘bān - whether it is still Sha‘bān or the beginning of Ramaḍān - they choose to fast out of precaution. The question is: Will such a fast be counted as part of Ramaḍān?

The answer is found in the *Ḥadīth*. ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه narrated:

مَنْ صَامَ الْيَوْمَ الَّذِي يُشَكُّ فِيهِ فَقَدْ عَصَى أَبَا الْقَاسِمِ رضي الله عنه

“Whoever fasts on the day concerning which there is doubt, has disobeyed Abu Al-Qasim.”¹

Imām Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah relates an incident concerning ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه:

“‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه and some companions brought roasted meat on a day that was uncertain - whether it was from Ramaḍān or not. Everyone gathered to eat except one man who stepped aside. ‘Ammār رضي الله عنه said to him, ‘Come and eat.’ The man replied, ‘I am fasting.’

¹ Sunan al-Nasā’i: 2188

‘Ammār رضي الله عنه then said, ‘If you truly believe in Allāh and the Last Day, then come and eat.’”¹

Reflect on how strict the Companions رضي الله عنهم were regarding *Yawm al-Shakk* - they would not fast on this day at all, and if someone did, they would ask him to break the fast.

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه used to say:

لَوْ صُمْتُ السَّنَةَ كُلَّهَا لَأَفْطَرْتُ الْيَوْمَ الَّذِي يُشَكُّ فِيهِ

“Even if I were to fast the entire year, I would not fast on the day of doubt.”²

The prohibition of fasting on *Yawm al-Shakk* is because the Prophet ﷺ clearly instructed that the beginning of Ramaḍān is based on *sighting the crescent (Ru'yat al-Hilāl)*. Fasting before confirmed sighting is, therefore, against the explicit command of the Prophet ﷺ.

Hence, Muslims should wait for confirmed sighting on the 29th of Sha‘bān. If the crescent is sighted, Ramaḍān begins; if not, Sha‘bān should be completed as thirty days.

¹ Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah: 4/111

² Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah: 4/109

10 - Determining ‘Eīd al-Adḥā

According to the Day After ‘Arafah

These days, a very appealing idea is being presented - that since the *Ḥujjāj*, who are thousands of miles away from us, are performing the rites of *Ḥajj*, we too should offer our sacrifice on the same day after *Yawm ‘Arafah*. They say that when the pilgrims realise that although they are far from their families, yet the entire Muslim world is sharing their happiness, it increases their joy. Therefore, we should celebrate ‘Eīd al-Adḥā on the day following *Yawm ‘Arafah* along with the *Ḥujjāj*.

The question is: Does the *Sharī‘ah* contain any evidence that the rest of the world should celebrate ‘Eīd on the day after *Yawm ‘Arafah*? And are *Ḥajj* and *Qurbānī* interlinked acts of worship, or are they independent from each other?

As far as the *Sharī‘ah* is concerned, there is no *Ḥadīth* in which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said that the entire world must offer sacrifice on the day after *Yawm ‘Arafah*. Since there is no such evidence, the invalidity of this view is self-evident.

Regarding the claim that *Ḥajj* and *Qurbānī* are related, this too is baseless and completely incorrect. There is no proof for it in the *Qur’ān* or *Ḥadīth*. The conditions,

pillars, and rites of *Hajj* are entirely different and unrelated to the rulings of sacrifice.

Another point worth noting is that *Hajj* was made obligatory in the 8th year after *Hijrah*, and the Prophet ﷺ performed it in the 10th year, whereas the act of *Qurbānī* began much earlier - in the 2nd year after *Hijrah*. It is narrated in a *Hadīth*:

عن أنس قال: قدم رسول الله ﷺ المدينة وهم يومان يلعبون فيهما، فقال: ما هذان اليومان؟ قالوا: كنا نلعب فيهما في الجاهلية، فقال رسول الله ﷺ: إن الله قد أبدلكم بهما خيرا منهما: يوم الأضحى، ويوم الفطر

‘Anas رضي الله عنه narrated that when the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ arrived in Madīnah, the people had two days on which they would celebrate. He asked, “What are these two days?” They said, “We used to celebrate them in the days of ignorance.” The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, “Indeed, Allāh has replaced them with two better days - the Day of *Adḥā* and the Day of *Fiṭr*.”¹

These two ‘*Eīds* were established from the 2nd year after *Hijrah*, while *Hajj* was made obligatory after the 8th year. It is therefore not difficult to understand that there is no connection between *Hajj* and *Qurbānī*. One must also reflect: If sacrifice was tied to *Hajj*, and the day after ‘*Arafah* was meant to be the day of

¹ Sunan Abi Dāwūd: 1134

sacrifice for all, then what would be the status of the sacrifices that were performed during the years before *Hajj* was even made obligatory?

This clearly shows that *Hajj* and *Qurbānī* are not interdependent. To claim that they are connected when the *Sharī‘ah* provides no such evidence is itself a serious sin and a reprehensible innovation. This innovation was first introduced by ISNA (Islamic Society of North America), and they themselves admit that they initiated it in an attempt to create unity among Muslims.

Important Clarification

The confusion actually arises from the assumption that since the *Hujjāj* also perform sacrifices, it must mean that *Qurbānī* is connected to *Hajj*. In this regard, it is important to understand that the sacrifice performed by the pilgrims and the one performed by other Muslims are two entirely different acts.

The sacrifice offered by the *Hujjāj* is related to *Hajj* itself - it is known as *Dam al-Tamattu‘*, *Dam al-Qirān*, or *Dam al-Shukr*. On the other hand, the sacrifice performed by non-pilgrims is neither *Dam al-Tamattu‘* nor *Dam al-Qirān*, rather it is the *Sunnah* of Ibrāhīm



It is narrated that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was once asked about the purpose of *Qurbānī*, and he replied that it is the practice of Ibrāhīm ؑ:

عن زيد بن أرقم قال: قلت: أو قالوا: يا رسول الله ما هذه الأضاحي؟
قال: سنة أبيكم إبراهيم

‘Zayd ibn Arqam ؓ reported that the companions asked, “O Messenger of Allāh, what is this sacrifice?” He replied, “It is the practice of your father Ibrāhīm ؑ.”¹

From this *Ḥadīth*, it is clear that the sacrifice performed on ‘*Eīd al-Adḥā*’ is a distinct and independent act of worship - the *Sunnah* of Ibrāhīm ؑ - and has no direct connection with the rituals of *Ḥajj*. It also proves that trying to link the *Qurbānī* of ordinary Muslims with that of the *Ḥujjāj* is a fabricated and baseless notion with no foundation or evidence in *Sharī‘ah*.

A Subtle But Important Point

Those who say, “We follow the pilgrims,” should first understand what following actually means. If true following is intended, then when the *Ḥujjāj* perform *Qurbānī*, we should do so after them - not before.

¹ Sunan Ibn Mājah: 3127

Consider this carefully: When people in Australia perform *Qurbānī* on the same day as the *Ḥujjāj*, the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah* has not yet even begun in Saudi Arabia - it is still night there. Even if the pilgrims begin their sacrifices as early as possible, it would still be around 9 or 10 a.m. in Makkah, whereas in Australia it would already be around 5 or 6 p.m. In other words, the pilgrims would not have even started their *Qurbānī* while the people in Australia would have already completed theirs.

Now the question is: Are we truly following the *Ḥujjāj*, or are the *Ḥujjāj* following us? If we perform our *Qurbānī* one day later, then without doubt we would actually be following the pilgrims, since by that time they would have already completed their sacrifice.

Similarly, on the day of *‘Eīd al-Adḥā*, Muslims first perform the *‘Eīd* prayer and then offer their *Qurbānī*. The pilgrims, however, do not perform the *‘Eīd* prayer at all. So, in which prayer are we supposedly following the *Ḥujjāj*?

In conclusion, Allāh ﷻ has made *Ḥajj* an independent act of worship, and likewise the two *‘Eīds* are independent acts of worship - all of which depend upon the sighting of the moon (*Ru’yat al-Hilāl*).

10.1 The Determination of the 10th of *Dhul-Hijjah* Depends on the Sighting of the Moon

It is completely incorrect to claim that the sighting of the moon is not required for *‘Eīd al-Adhā*.

It is narrated from Abū Mālīk al-Ashja‘ī that al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥārith al-Jadali said:

عن أبي مالك الأشجعي عن الحسين بن الحارث الجدلي - جديلة قيس - أن أمير مكة خطب ثم قال: عهد إلينا رسول الله ﷺ أن ننسك للرؤية فإن لم نره وشهد شاهدا عدل نسكنا بشهادتهما.

Abū Mālīk al-Ashja‘ī reported that al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥārith al-Jadali said: The governor of Makkah delivered a sermon and said, “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ took a covenant from us that we should perform our *Qurbānī* upon sighting the new moon. If we do not see it, and two upright witnesses testify to its sighting, then we will perform our *Qurbānī* based on their testimony.”¹

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-‘Abbād explained this *Ḥadīth* saying:

وقوله: (أن ننسك للرؤية) يعني: رؤية هلال ذي الحجة، يعني: أن ننسك نسك الحج، ونذبح الأضاحي، ونصلي عيد الأضحى أو أن ثبوت عيد

¹ Sunan Abī Dāwūd: 1/339–340

الأضحى وثبوت الحج إنما يكون بشهادة رجلين، يعني: إن شهد بذلك شاهدا عدل.

“The phrase *“that we perform the sacrifice upon sighting”* refers to the sighting of the crescent of *Dhul-Hijjah*. In other words, the performing of the rites of *Hajj*, the offering of *Qurbānī*, and the *‘Eid al-Adhā* prayer are all tied to the sighting of the new moon - or, more precisely, their confirmation is established through the testimony of two upright witnesses.”¹

It is also narrated from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn al-Khaṭṭāb:

عن عبد الرحمن بن زيد بن الخطاب: أنه خطب في اليوم الذي يُشك فيه فقال: ألا إني جالست أصحاب رسول الله ﷺ وسألتهم وأنهم حدثوني أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: صوموا لرؤيته وأفطروا لرؤيته وانسكوا لها فإن غمَّ عليكم فأمموا ثلاثين يوما، فإن شهد شاهدان مسلمان فصوموا وأفطروا.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd once addressed the people on a day of doubt and said: “I sat with the companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and asked them about this matter, and they informed me that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘Fast upon sighting it, end your fast

¹ Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd by al-‘Abbād: 3/255

upon sighting it, and perform your *Qurbānī* upon sighting it. If the sky is overcast, complete thirty days; and if two trustworthy Muslims testify, then begin your fast and end it accordingly.”¹

The phrase “انسكوا لها” here clearly means “perform the *Qurbānī*.”

From this we learn that the month of *Qurbānī*, like all other lunar months, begins with the sighting of the new moon. There is no verse or *Ḥadīth* which states that *Qurbānī* must be performed the day after the Day of ‘Arafah.

It is also narrated that Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها said:

عن أم سلمة رضي الله عنها أن النبي ﷺ قال : إذا رأيتم هلال ذي الحجة وأراد أحدكم أن يضحي فليمسك عن شعره وأظفاره.

Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “When you see the crescent of *Dhul-Hijjah*, and one of you intends to offer a *Qurbānī*, then he should refrain from cutting his hair and nails.”²

This *Ḥadīth* clearly shows that the commencement of ‘*Eid al-Adḥā* is also linked to the sighting of the moon. The Prophet ﷺ did not instruct, “Determine the Day

¹ Musnad Aḥmad: 4/321

² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 2/169

of ‘*Arafah* and sacrifice the following day with the pilgrims.”

Imām al-Tirmidhī has also reported that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

أن النبي ﷺ قال: الصوم يوم تصومون، والفطر يوم تفطرون، والأضحى يوم تضحون.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Fasting is on the day you all fast; ‘*Eid al-Fiṭr* is on the day you all celebrate it; and ‘*Eid al-Adḥā* is on the day you all offer sacrifice.”¹

This means that fasting, ‘*Eid al-Fiṭr*, and ‘*Eid al-Adḥā* are all dependent on the sighting of the moon - that is, begin fasting upon sighting it, and celebrate the ‘*Eids* upon sighting it.

‘Allāmah Ṣafar Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī رحمه الله، in his monumental work *al-‘Ilā’ al-Sunan* (a comprehensive encyclopaedia of *Aḥādīth* consisting of 21 volumes, rich with juristic discussions), explains this narration of *al-Tirmidhī* by saying that this *Ḥadīth* establishes that the command of sighting applies to all months. Therefore, the sighting of the moon should be observed for every month, including that of *Dhul-Hijjah*.

¹ Sunan al-Tirmidhī: 1/268

10.2 The Day of *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* is the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah*

All jurists are unanimously agreed that *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* falls on the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah*. According to all four schools of jurisprudence, the Day of Sacrifice (*Yawm al-Naḥr*) is the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah*.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jazīrī writes:

“Among the conditions for the validity of *Qurbānī* (sacrifice) is that it must be performed on the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah*, according to the four Imams.”¹

On Dr. Khalid Shaukat’s website (moonsighting.com), there are scholarly papers from both Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn and Shaykh al-Islām Mufti Taqī Usmani. The following key points are summarised from their discussions:

1. Question:

If someone returns from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, and the lunar dates differ between the two countries for example, *Yawm ‘Arafah* (9th *Dhul-Ḥijjah*) in Saudi Arabia corresponds to the 8th in Pakistan - should he fast according to the Saudi date or according to his local date (Pakistan’s 9th *Dhul-Ḥijjah*)?

¹ Al-Fiqh ‘ala al-Madhāhib al-Arba‘ah

Answer:

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn explained that scholars differ on this issue. However, the most correct and practical view is to base all dates on local moonsighting, as otherwise complicated situations would arise.

For instance, if Saudi Arabia’s *Yawm ‘Arafah* falls on what is locally the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah*, fasting would not be permissible, since fasting on *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* is prohibited.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Fast when you see the crescent, and break your fast when you see it.”

Thus, the Islamic calendar - its beginnings and endings - is determined by local moonsighting, not by foreign observation.

2. Summary of Shaykh al-Islām Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmānī’s paper (Urdu original)

Background: In 1421 AH, North America’s *Shūrā* (including the Islamic Society of North America, ISNA) resolved by majority that *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* - like *‘Eīd al-Fiṭr* should follow local moonsighting. A few years later, ISNA unilaterally shifted and tied *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* entirely to the *Ḥajj* date in Saudi Arabia, disregarding local 10 *Dhul-Ḥijjah*. Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmānī critically examined

this change and, with detailed *Sharī'ah* evidence, showed why the ISNA position is unsound.

Key points from his critique:

1. He read ISNA's '*Eīd al-Aḍḥā*' paper carefully and concluded that linking the worldwide '*Eīd al-Aḍḥā*' to Saudi *Yawm 'Arafah* violates Qur'ān, *Sunnah*, and the established practice of the *Ummah*.
2. For fourteen centuries no recognised jurist proposed what ISNA proposed. The argument is built on fundamental mistakes and irregular reasoning.
3. Inconsistency: ISNA upholds local moonsighting for '*Eīd al-Fiṭr*' but abandons it for '*Eīd al-Aḍḥā*'. Using two different criteria to build one Islamic calendar creates confusion and greater disunity.
4. "Unity of the *Ummah*" is a noble aim, but it cannot override clear *Sharī'* rules. Due to natural differences in horizons and time zones, a single global day for both '*Eīds*' is not practically or legally required. Forcing a single date often produces more *fitnah* than unity.

Conclusion: Dates for '*Eīd al-Aḍḥā*' should follow local moonsighting just as for '*Eīd al-Fiṭr*'. Tying '*Eīd al-Aḍḥā*' to Saudi dating ignores the *Sharī'ah* basis of the

calendar and introduces contradictions rather than solving them.

3) Further Points from Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmānī’s Discussion

ISNA also acknowledged that for over fourteen centuries, *‘Eid al-Aḍḥā* across the Muslim world was never tied to the *Hijrī* calendar of Makkah or Saudi Arabia. They argued, however, that in the modern era - thanks to advancements in communication - it is now easy to know the exact date of *Ḥajj* and *Yawm ‘Arafah* in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, they claimed, there is no harm in observing *‘Eid al-Aḍḥā* worldwide on the day following *Yawm ‘Arafah* in Saudi Arabia.

Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmānī refuted this reasoning, stating that ISNA’s claim has no basis in the Qur’ān or *Sunnah*. If it were correct, then the Prophet ﷺ, the Companions رضي الله عنهم, the *Tābi‘īn*, the *Taba‘ Tābi‘īn*, and the early scholars would have made efforts to determine when *Yawm ‘Arafah* occurred in Makkah in order to fix *‘Eid al-Aḍḥā*. In reality, this never occurred. No classical jurist ever suggested that the Day of *‘Eid al-Aḍḥā* be set according to Makkah’s date. Thus, ISNA’s position is neither *Shar‘an* nor practically tenable.

4) Reference to the Amman (Jordan) Islamic Fiqh Academy Resolution

Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmānī further pointed out that the Jordan Islamic Fiqh Academy, in its annual session held on 11–16 October 1986, attended by over one hundred prominent jurists and scholars from across the Muslim world, unanimously resolved that:

“Each Muslim country should determine the dates of *‘Eid al-Fiṭr* and *‘Eid al-Aḍḥā* according to its own local moonsighting.”

This resolution, he noted, represents the consensus of contemporary jurists globally.

In conclusion, Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmānī advised ISNA that such critical *Shar‘ī* issues should not be decided unilaterally but should be referred to authoritative international scholarly bodies, such as the Islamic Fiqh Academy.¹

Extract from Newsletter No. 107, dated March 8, 2002 - Published by the Islamic Centre of Canada

In this newsletter, the president expressed his views as follows:

Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, during the *Hajj* on the Day of Sacrifice (10 *Dhul-Hijjah*)

¹ From: www.moonsighting.com

in *Minā*, after stoning the *Jamārāt* (symbols of Shayṭān), said: “This is the greatest of all days.” Then he added, “O Allāh, bear witness that I have conveyed Your message to my Ummah.”

After that, the Prophet ﷺ delivered his *Khuṭbah al-Wadāʿ* (Farewell Sermon).

Each year when *Yawm ʿArafah* - the main pillar of *Ḥajj* - is observed according to Saudi dates (9 *Dhul-Ḥijjah* there), many Muslims around the world who are unfamiliar with the *Sharʿī* principles of *Rūʿyat al-Hilāl* (moonsighting) and the science of astronomy become entangled in the argument that *ʿEīd al-Aḍḥā* must be celebrated globally the day after *Yawm ʿArafah* (the Saudi 10 *Dhul-Ḥijjah*). They reason that failing to do so would imply that *Ḥajj* itself was performed on the wrong day.

This, however, is purely a mental fabrication - it carries no *Sharʿī* or scientific weight whatsoever. It is nothing more than a product of ignorance.

The Islamic Centre of Canada’s moonsighting committee - along with numerous institutions in North America, Southeast Asia, South Africa, and Australia - celebrate *ʿEīd al-Aḍḥā* locally on the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah* based on their own moonsighting. This practice is in complete harmony with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

The two ‘*Eīds* were instituted by the Prophet ﷺ in the second year of *Hijrah*, while *Ḥajj* was made obligatory only in the eighth year of *Hijrah*. Therefore, there is absolutely no intrinsic link between the two acts of worship. These are independent obligations, and each is governed by clear *Shar‘ī* evidence. ‘*Eīd al-Aḍḥā* cannot be turned into ‘*Eīd al-Ḥajj*.” The Prophet ﷺ could easily have inquired when *Ḥajj* in Makkah would occur - but he never did. Hence, there is no religious basis for binding the global Muslim community to Makkah’s local calendar.

The Case of Zaytuna Institute (USA)

Imām Zayd Shākir of the Zaytuna Institute announced that according to local moonsighting, the month of *Dhul-Ḥijjah* would begin on January 11, 2005, making ‘*Eīd al-Aḍḥā* fall on Friday, January 21, 2005, across North America.

He explained that this decision was grounded on several clear principles:

1. The start of every *Hijrī* month depends on local moonsighting, not on adopting Saudi dates.
2. To impose Saudi lunar dates internationally is to ignore both observable reality and established *Shar‘ī* principles.

3. Astronomical and geographical conditions differ from region to region; 'Eīd observance must reflect this natural and *Shar'ī* truth.
4. The Prophet ﷺ commanded adherence to moonsighting in *Mutawātir* (widely transmitted) *Aḥādīth*, and the entire *Ummah* has always agreed on this.

He concluded:

“The Prophet ﷺ instituted both 'Eīds in the second year of Hijrah, while *Ḥajj* became obligatory in the eighth or ninth year. To link the 'Eīds with *Ḥajj* is deeply misguided. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ never tied them to Makkah's lunar dates - so why should we abandon this noble *Sunnah* and incur sin by doing so?”

He further warned that adopting two separate criteria one for eleven months based on local moonsighting and another for *Dhul-Ḥijjah* based on Saudi dates - creates two conflicting calendars, which is absurd and untenable.

“Allāh ﷻ has placed in the sky a perfect, perpetual calendar - the moon - until the end of time. Human

calculations may err, but the divine lunar system can never change or fail.”¹

10.3 Reasons Proving that ‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā Is Tied to the 10th of Dhul-Ḥijjah - Not the Day After Yawm ‘Arafah

The following points clarify beyond doubt that ‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā is determined by the 10th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah* based on local moonsighting, and not by the day following *Yawm ‘Arafah* in Makkah:

1. The practice of the Prophet ﷺ and the entire early *Ummah* - from the Companions رضي الله عنهم, the *Tābi‘īn*, and the *Taba‘ Tābi‘īn* to the leading *Muḥaddithīn* and *Fuqahā’* throughout fourteen centuries - never included slaughtering animals on the same day as the pilgrims in Makkah.
2. Neither the *Qur’ān*, *Ḥadīth*, classical *Fiqh*, nor the statements of any of the rightly-guided caliphs or the four *Imāms* contain even a single indication that ‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā should be observed the day after *Yawm ‘Arafah* in Makkah.
3. The date of ‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā is determined through *Rū’yat al-Hilāl*, not by the calendar of *Ḥajj*. No

¹ www.moonsighting.com

Ḥadīth exists to suggest that the timing of *Ḥajj* determines the day of *Qurbānī*.

4. To link *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* to the date of *Ḥajj* is a *Bid‘ah* (innovation) - and every *Bid‘ah* is misguidance. Establishing an act as sacred as *Qurbānī* upon an innovation is a grave error.
5. Those who introduced this *Bid‘ah* must answer several essential questions:
 - How did the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ determine *Yawm al-Naḥr* (the Day of Sacrifice) while residing in Madīnah?
 - When did the Prophet ﷺ begin performing the *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* prayer - after *Ḥajj* became obligatory, or from the second year of *Hijrah*, when *Ḥajj* had not yet been prescribed?
 - Did the Prophet ﷺ ever adjust the date of *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* or *Qurbānī* according to Makkah’s calendar?
 - Did any of the *Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn* ever change the local date of *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* to match the *Ḥajj* dates in Makkah?
 - Is there any evidence that any Companion ﷺ sent observers to Makkah to determine *Yawm ‘Arafah* so they could celebrate *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* the following day?

- Did any Companion ﷺ living outside Makkah ever perform the *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* prayer or *Qurbānī* in accordance with Makkah’s calendar?
- Has any of the four *Imāms* or major jurists of Islam ever stated that *‘Eīd al-Aḍḥā* should be determined according to the Makkah date? (A solitary or anomalous view holds no weight in *Fiqh*.)

If the answer to all these questions is - as it must be - “no,” then what else can this be but a clear *Bid‘ah*?

11 - The Fast of *Yawm ‘Arafah*

It is often asserted passionately that *‘Arafah* occurs only once - in Makkah - on the 9th of *Dhul-Hijjah*. Therefore, it is claimed, Muslims all over the world should fast on that same day when the pilgrims stand in *‘Arafah*, regardless of the local date in their own countries. The reasoning given is that the fast is linked to *Yawm ‘Arafah* itself and not to local moonsighting.

In earlier times, when there were no means of instant communication such as media, phones, or air travel, it would take weeks for such information to reach other regions. Now, with modern technology, news from Makkah can reach every part of the world in seconds, and thus, it is argued, there remains no excuse not to align with the Saudi date.

However, this assumption is incorrect. The issue depends on whether the moonsighting (*Rū'yat al-Hilāl*) of Saudi Arabia is legally valid (*Mu'tabar*) for other regions. According to the *Ḥanafī* jurists, the preferred (*Rājiḥ*) opinion is that the moonsighting of *Bilād Ba'īdah* (distant lands) - those where there is a significant difference in sunrise and sunset times - is not binding upon one another. The difference in the lunar horizons (*Maṭāli'*) between Saudi Arabia and many other countries has been confirmed through repeated observation.

Therefore, just as each country has its own valid prayer times, *Suḥūr*, and *Iftār* timings - and no one can use the prayer times of Saudi Arabia in another land - likewise, the beginning of *Ramaḍān*, *Eīd*, *Qurbānī*, and the fast of ‘*Arafah*’ all depend on local moonsighting.

Accordingly, the reward of fasting on *Yawm ‘Arafah* is attained by fasting on the day that corresponds to the 9th of Dhul-Ḥijjah according to one’s own local calendar, even if that day coincides with ‘*Eīd al-Aḍḥā*’ in Makkah.

In fact, several *Aḥādīth* explicitly mention the 9th of Dhul-Ḥijjah when describing the fast’s virtue - for instance, the *Ḥadīth* narrated by some of the Mothers of the Believers ﷺ:

“The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to fast the first nine days of *Dhul-Hijjah*, ‘*Āshūrā*’ and three days of every month, that is, the first Monday (of the month) and Thursday.”¹

This indicates that the fast pertains to the 9th of *Dhul-Hijjah*, not merely to the day pilgrims stand in ‘*Arafah*. Since the merit of fasting on the first eight days of *Dhul-Hijjah* clearly follows each country’s own calendar, the same applies to the ninth day as well.

¹ Sunan Abi Dāwūd: 2437

If one insists on following Saudi Arabia's date, serious inconsistencies arise. There are countries where the lunar date is a day ahead of Saudi Arabia. For them, when it is the 9th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah* in Makkah, it is already the 10th in their own calendar - the day of '*Eīd al-Adḥā*' when fasting is *Ḥarām*. How, then, could they fast on a day that is religiously prohibited for them?

Islam is not confined to the 21st century. For fourteen centuries, even when people had no access to information from Makkah, Muslims everywhere fasted on *Yawm 'Arafah* according to their own local moonsighting. Even today, not everyone has equal access to instant communication. Hence, the most sound, practical, and *Shar'ī* approach remains that each region observes the fast of '*Arafah*' when it is the 9th of *Dhul-Ḥijjah* according to their own local sighting.

Linguistically, the term *Yawm* (day) refers to the period from sunrise to sunset, while *Ṣawm* (fasting) begins at dawn and ends at sunset. If one were to base the fast of *Yawm 'Arafah* on Saudi timings, consistency would require beginning the fast when dawn breaks in Makkah and breaking it when the sun sets there - an absurd proposition, as that time might correspond to night in the Far East or Far West, or even to perpetual day or night in the polar regions.

Thus, just as fasting times differ by region, the *fast of 'Arafah* too must be observed according to local time and local moonsighting.¹

In conclusion, Muslims in each country are not obliged to fast on *Yawm 'Arafah* according to Saudi Arabia's calendar. The people of Saudi Arabia should fast when their own 9th of *Dhul-Hijjah* occurs, and the people of every other land should do likewise according to their own local 9th of *Dhul-Hijjah*.

¹ For further details, refer to Fatwā No. 143909201962 issued by Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia ('Allāmah Mufti Muhammad Yūsuf Banūrī Town, Karachi).

12 - Findings from Dr. Ikramullah Ahmed's PhD Survey on Moonsighting

Dr. Ikramullah Ahmed has completed his PhD on the topic of Moonsighting with Charles Sturt University, in which he examined the subject in depth - exploring every dimension from the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh*, and the discussions of both classical and contemporary scholars. As part of his research, he conducted an extensive nationwide survey that received responses from over 5,600 participants across Australia.

Below are some of the key findings and insights drawn from this comprehensive survey.

Survey Results

1. Gender of Participants

A total of 62.36% of participants were male, while 37.64% were female. This clearly shows that the issue of moonsighting affects not only the male Muslim population in Australia but also a significant proportion of females, highlighting its broad impact across the community.

2. Age Distribution

It was quite remarkable to see almost 500 participants aged 56 or above take part in the survey. The largest group of respondents, however, were aged 36–45

years, with 2,212 participants, showing that this age group is particularly engaged with the topic of moonsighting. The 18–25 age group had 509 participants, slightly higher than the 56+ category, indicating notable interest among the younger generation as well.

3. State of Residence

The majority of responses came from New South Wales (NSW) - unsurprising given that major Islamic organisations such as ANIC, AFIC, and Moonsighting Australia are based or headquartered there. This suggests that Muslims in NSW are especially invested in moonsighting-related matters, particularly after the recent announcements by these bodies.

Interestingly, over 1,150 responses came from Victoria, showing that the issue also carries great importance within the Victorian Muslim community. However, the number of responses from Queensland was significantly lower than expected, despite moonsighting challenges being common there. As expected, the Northern Territory recorded the fewest responses, consistent with its smaller Muslim population.

4. Ethnic Heritage

The largest ethnic group represented in the survey was from the Subcontinent, making up 35% of respondents. Southeast Asians followed closely at 27%, while 17% selected “Other,” reflecting Australia’s ethnic diversity. The combined percentage of Lebanese/Middle Eastern, Turkish, and African backgrounds was just under 20%.

5. School of Thought Followed

Reflecting the demographics, nearly 60% of respondents identified as *Ḥanafī*, consistent with the Subcontinent’s influence. Around 19% mentioned not following any particular *Madh-hab*, representing a range of independent or mixed approaches to moonsighting.

Interestingly, among the 210 participants who selected “Other,” over 70 identified as *Shī’a/Ja’farī*, even though that option wasn’t explicitly listed. This proactive participation highlights the *Shī’a* community’s strong interest and willingness to engage in the national moonsighting discussion.

6. Determining the Beginning of Ramaḍān

The majority of participants reported relying on Moonsighting Australia to determine the beginning of Ramaḍān. Over 20% depended on their local masjid

or organisation, showing the important role these institutions play in guiding communities.

Notably, only around 15% (approximately 850 respondents) followed the announcement made by ANIC or the Muftī of Australia, suggesting that while these bodies are recognised, they are not the primary reference point for most Australian Muslims.

7. Determining the Day of ‘Eīd

The responses mirrored those of the previous question: over 50% followed Moonsighting Australia, 22% followed their local masjid or organisation, and less than 15% followed ANIC or the Muftī of Australia.

8. Confidence in the Source Followed

The majority of participants expressed confidence in their chosen source for moonsighting decisions. 55% strongly agreed, and an additional 28% agreed, showing a high level of trust and consistency in the systems and authorities they follow.

9. Considered Methods for Establishing Ramaḍān and ‘Eīd

Around 64% of respondents considered local moonsighting as the preferred method, indicating a strong preference for sighting within Australia. Almost 28% supported regional sighting, reflecting growing

interest in cooperation with neighbouring regions, while 14% supported global sighting.

Smaller percentages (between 6%–14%) indicated reliance on *Ḥisāb* (astronomical calculations) - whether local, regional, or global - showing that while some consider scientific data, traditional sighting remains dominant.

10. Change in Method Over the Past Five Years

Most participants have maintained consistency in their method of determining Ramaḍān and *ʿĒd*. However, about 20% - over 1,100 individuals - reported changing their method within the last five years.

Reasons for switching included family unity, learning about alternative methods, or a desire to align with the majority. These responses reflect how personal, familial, and social influences often shape religious practice in Australia.

11. Differences Within Families

About 69% reported that their family members began Ramaḍān and *ʿĒd* on the same days over the last three years, showing a commendable level of unity. Yet, 31% - over 1,700 respondents - acknowledged differences within their households, indicating that

moonsighting disagreements still cause division at the family level.

12. Impact on Family Relations

From 1,576 responses, the average impact rating was 4 out of 10, suggesting a moderate effect on family dynamics.

- 346 participants reported no impact (0), showing that many families manage such differences peacefully.
- 188 participants (12%) rated the impact as 10, indicating severe conflict or strain.
- The majority of remaining responses clustered around moderate levels (ratings of 4–6), showing that while some tension exists, most families navigate it with tolerance and understanding.

13. Views on the Future of Moonsighting Unity

Participants were asked what they believe should be the ultimate outcome to the ongoing moonsighting differences in Australia:

- 43% hoped for *Ittiḥād* (unity), expressing optimism that one day all Australian Muslims will start Ramaḍān and 'Eīd together.

- 35% felt that Muslims will ultimately accept the reality of differing interpretations, recognising *Ikhtilāf* (difference of opinion) as a natural part of the faith.
- 22% believed that unity will remain unachievable in the near future. This sentiment likely stems from recent controversies involving ANIC, AFIC, and Lakemba Mosque, which may have contributed to disillusionment and frustration among some respondents.

The final open-ended question invited suggestions for improvement. Over 2,700 participants shared their views - demonstrating how deeply this issue resonates within the community. The responses reflected a shared desire for transparency, communication, and collective leadership to resolve the recurring differences in determining the start and end of Ramaḍān and 'Eīd in Australia.

From these findings, it is evident that local moonsighting is steadily on the rise in Australia, largely due to the dedicated efforts of the '*Ulamā*' associated with Moonsighting Australia. The data clearly demonstrates that the majority of Australian Muslims now give preference to local moonsighting when determining the beginning and end of Ramaḍān and 'Eīd.

To claim that local sighting is not the majority view, or that alternative methodologies outnumber it, is factually incorrect - the survey results speak for themselves.

13 - The Permissibility of Using Optical Aids to Sight the Moon

The Islamic calendar is purely lunar and follows the sighting of the moon as instructed in the authentic prophetic narrations. The beginning and ending of each month - especially for acts of worship such as fasting in Ramaḍān and celebrating 'Eīd - are determined through *Ru'yah*, i.e., physical sighting of the new crescent.

While the command is explicit about sighting the moon, scholars have differed regarding how this sighting may be achieved. The core of this discussion is whether the use of optical instruments, such as telescopes or binoculars, constitutes a valid *Ru'yah* in the *Shar'ī* sense. This article aims to explore the details of this discussion, examining both classical and contemporary perspectives.

13.1 Islam and the Use of Technology

There is no inherent contradiction between Islam and science or technological advancement. Islam encourages observation, reflection, and the pursuit of beneficial knowledge. The use of modern tools and

technology is not prohibited merely because they were unavailable during the Prophet's ﷺ time.

It is true that telescopes are a recent development and were not used in the early centuries of Islam. However, the same can be said for countless inventions - such as cars, microphones, or mobile phones - none of which existed then, yet are widely used today. No scholar argues that their absence in the early period makes them impermissible. What matters in *Sharī'ah* is not the tool itself, but whether its use aligns with the commands of Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ.

Hence, if a form of technology *contradicts* a direct prophetic command, it cannot be accepted. Astronomical calculations, for example, fall into this category because they seek to replace *Ru'yah* with mathematical prediction, contrary to the Prophet's ﷺ instruction: *"Fast upon sighting it and break your fast upon sighting it."*¹

However, optical aids such as telescopes and binoculars do not contradict this command - they

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 13/21

merely assist and enhance the human eye in fulfilling it.

13.2 What is a Telescope – A Brief History

A telescope is an instrument built to gather and enlarge visible light, allowing the observer to see distant objects in greater detail. The term detail here refers to a telescope's ability to distinguish fine features - known as its angular resolution. Generally, larger telescopes collect more light and can reveal sharper, clearer images. However, size alone does not guarantee better performance, as the Earth's atmosphere can blur or limit a telescope's resolving power.¹

The exact origin of the telescope remains uncertain. As early as the 13th century, Roger Bacon mentioned combining lenses to view distant objects more clearly. In later centuries, others such as Leonard Digges and Giovanni Batista Porta made similar claims, though without solid evidence. The first true refracting

¹ Lumen Learning. (n.d.). Introduction to Astronomy. In Physics LibreTexts, p 61.

telescope¹, however, is widely attributed to the Dutch spectacle-maker Hans Lipperhey in 1608. His invention quickly spread across Europe, with scholars like Thomas Harriot in England and Simon Marius in Germany using it for celestial observation. Soon after, Galileo Galilei of Italy became the first to build and use a telescope systematically for studying the heavens, marking the beginning of modern astronomy.²

Note: It should also be clarified that this discussion concerns traditional optical telescopes that merely enhance human vision. It does not include radio telescopes, infrared instruments, or devices capable of showing celestial objects below the horizon or beyond cloud cover. The focus here is strictly on conventional telescopes that gather and magnify visible light - tools that help the observer see what is naturally present in the sky, not instruments that artificially generate or simulate an image.

¹ Refracting telescopes (refractors) use lenses to gather and bend (refract) light so that it meets at a focus point and can be seen through an eyepiece.

² Bond, P. (2001). Telescopes in history. In P. Murdin (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Astronomy and Astrophysics (p. 1). Nature Publishing Group and Institute of Physics Publishing.

13.2.1 What's the Difference Between a Lens and a Mirror?

Before looking at the different types of telescopes, it's important to understand the two main parts they rely on: lenses and mirrors.

A lens is a piece of curved glass that bends what you are looking at as it passes through it. This bending, called refraction, helps bring faraway objects closer and makes them easier to see. Lenses are used in glasses, cameras, and refracting *telescopes*.

A mirror, on the other hand, doesn't let you look through it. It reflects what you are observing, directing the image to your eye from a different angle. In a reflecting telescope, a curved mirror gathers what you are viewing and sends it to the eyepiece, where you can see it clearly.

So, the main difference is:

- A lens helps you see by *bending* what you are looking at.
- A mirror helps you see by *reflecting* what you are looking at.

In both cases, you are truly seeing the crescent with your own eyes. The telescope only helps make it appear larger and clearer; it does not create or generate a new image. It merely helps the eyes perform the same act of sight (*Ru'yah*) more effectively.

13.2.2 Refracting and Reflecting Telescopes

With the basics of lenses and mirrors understood, telescopes can be divided into two main types:

1. Refracting Telescopes (Refractors): The Refracting Telescope or Refractor uses a lens or lenses as the telescope's Primary Objective. Binoculars are a type of Refractor; occasionally you will find reflecting binoculars.¹

Graphic of Refractor



The Achromatic Refractor Image courtesy Mike Reynolds, Ph.D. of Florida State College of Jacksonville.

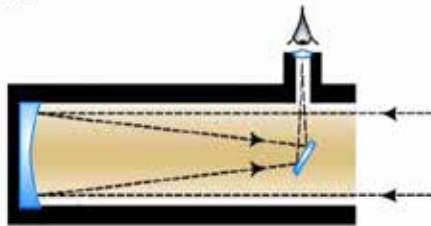
Figure 1: The Achromatic Refractor. Image courtesy of Mike Reynolds, Ph.D., Florida State College of

¹ Lumen Learning, Introduction to Astronomy, p. 67.

Jacksonville. Source: Lumen Learning, Introduction to Astronomy (Physics LibreTexts).

2. Reflecting Telescopes (Reflectors): The Reflecting Telescope or Reflector uses a concave mirror as the telescope's primary objective, rather than a lens or lenses.¹ In 1671, Isaac Newton presented the first practical reflecting telescope to the Royal Society in London. By replacing the lenses with a curved metal mirror, he solved the problem of colour distortion. His design - simple yet revolutionary - became the foundation for most modern telescopes used today.²

Graphic of Newtonian Reflector



The Newtonian ReflectorImage courtesy Mike Reynolds, Ph. D. of Florida State College of Jacksonville.

Figure 2: The Newtonian Reflector. Image courtesy of Mike Reynolds, Ph.D., Florida State College of

¹ Ibid, 67.

² Bond, P. (2001). Telescopes in History (p. 1)

Jacksonville. Source: Lumen Learning, Introduction to Astronomy (Physics LibreTexts).

Both types allow genuine visual sight, as they only gather and direct what the human eye is already capable of seeing.

13.2.3 Other Types of Telescopes

While there are many specialised telescopes available (for example space-based, infrared, ultraviolet, and radio telescopes), this article concentrates on just two - the refracting (lens-based) and reflecting (mirror-based) telescopes - because these are the ones truly applicable to the act of physical sighting of the moon's crescent. Other types either do not rely on the human eye directly (for example radio telescopes converting signals into data) or involve complex systems not accessible for community practice.

13.3 The Islamic Ruling on Using Optical Aids for Moonsighting

The question arises: does using telescopes or binoculars for the sighting of the new moon fulfil the *Shar'ī* requirement of *Ru'yah*? To answer this, we turn

to the statements and verdicts of classical and contemporary scholars.

If the moon is not sighted with the naked eye, it is not binding (*Wājib*) to actively search for it using a telescope - this is a matter of agreement among scholars. However, the discussion extends beyond this point. The central issue is not merely the permissibility of using telescopes, but how such instruments may help minimise the recurring differences in the commencement and conclusion of lunar months.

If the use of telescopes can contribute towards achieving unity in the beginning of Ramaḍān and the celebration of *‘Eīd* - particularly in countries like Australia, where multiple *‘Eīd* days are often observed - then it should not be dismissed. Employing telescopes does not contradict any *Shar’ī* ruling; rather, it serves to assist and enhance the act of *Ru’yah* by improving visibility. This discussion does not concern the use of astronomical calculations, but solely the utilisation of optical instruments that may facilitate collective sighting and bring greater harmony to the community in matters of worship and celebration.

To claim that the use of telescopes is impermissible simply because the term *Ru'yah* (sighting) implies the use of the naked eye is inconsistent when considered logically. The essence of *Ru'yah* is the act of seeing - whether aided or unaided - as long as the sighting itself is genuine and direct.

For instance, it is unanimously understood in *Sharī'ah* that it is *Ḥarām* to deliberately look at a non-*Maḥram* woman who is not properly covered. If a person were to observe her through a telescope or binoculars from a distance, no one would excuse him on the basis that it was not the "naked eye." The sin lies in the act of seeing - regardless of whether it was aided by an optical device.

Similarly, in matters of legal testimony (*Shahādah*) where rulings depend on what has been seen, if a person witnesses an event such as the sighting of a crime, a violation, or a significant occurrence through a telescope or binoculars, his testimony would still be valid. The judge would not dismiss it merely because his sight was aided by an instrument. What matters in *Sharī'ah* is the certainty of *Ru'yah* and the reliability of

the witness, not whether the observation was made with the naked eye or aided by a tool.

By the same reasoning, viewing the crescent moon through a telescope remains an act of *Ru'yah*, as the observer is genuinely seeing the moon itself, not an image or simulation. To reject such sighting on the grounds of technicality is therefore not supported by logic nor by the objectives of *Sharī'ah*.

13.4 Fatāwā of the 'Ulamā' Permitting the Use of Telescopes for Sighting the Moon

Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī رحمہ اللہ writes in Imdād al-Fatāwā: “The telescope is merely an instrument that enhances vision, and the act of sighting through it is still considered real sight (*Ru'yah*). Therefore, its ruling is similar to that of spectacles. Since *Ru'yah* - upon which the *Sharī* rulings depend - is genuinely achieved, it is undoubtedly valid and reliable, and thus becomes the basis for legal rulings.”¹

Mufti Riḍā al-Ḥaqq, the Grand Mufti of South Africa, writes in Fatāwā Dārul-'Ulūm Zakariyyā: “Telescopes only magnify the ability to see, just as eyeglasses do.

¹ Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī, Imdād al-Fatāwā, vol. 4, 191.

There is no objection in using them to sight and make observations. The reality of sighting through modern optical instruments is genuine visibility - it is not the creation of an image that does not exist. For this reason, one is permitted to use these modern optical aids when sighting the new moon.”¹

Maulana Khālid Saifullāh Raḥmānī writes in *Jadīd Fiqhī Masā’il*: “It should be understood that using modern instruments such as telescopes for moonsighting does not involve any deception or artificial creation. The telescope does not make something non-existent appear existent; rather, it assists in viewing what already exists but cannot be seen due to distance or limited eyesight. Our eyes have a natural limitation, and these instruments simply enhance that ability. The same principle applies in *Sharī‘ah* - for example, if a person standing on an elevated place sees the moon before others, his observation is valid and acceptable.”²

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn writes: “As for the use of what is called the *Darbīl* (optical aid) - the instrument used

¹ Fatāwā Dār al-‘Ulūm Zakariyyā, vol. 3, p. 252

² Khālid Saifullāh Raḥmānī, *Jadīd Fiqhī Masā’il*, vol. 2, pp. 16–17

for sighting the crescent - there is nothing wrong with it, but it is not obligatory, because the apparent meaning of the *Sunnah* is that we rely upon normal sighting, not any other means. However, if the telescope is used and the crescent is sighted by someone trustworthy, then that sighting may be acted upon. In the past, people also used to employ such means; for instance, they would climb up the minarets on the night before the 30th of *Sha‘bān* or the night before the 30th of Ramaḍān and would look for the crescent using this type of optical instrument.”¹

In addition to the opinions of individual scholars, several *Fatāwā* issued by major institutions also address this matter. The following response from *Dārul-‘Ulūm* Deoband clarifies the ruling regarding the use of telescopes for moonsighting:

Dārul-Iftā’, Dārul-‘Ulūm Deoband

Question: “Is it permissible to use a telescope to sight the moon of Ramaḍān and ‘Eid? Kindly provide an answer and guide me on this matter.”

¹ Fatāwā ‘Ulamā’ al-balad al-Ḥarām, p. 887

Answer: “Yes, it can be used. In the event that the crescent is sighted, the testimony or report of those who have seen it will be verified in accordance with the established *Sharī‘ah* principles for accepting witnesses or reports.”¹

Dārul-Iftā’, Jāmi‘ah ‘Ulūm Islāmiyyah

Question: “Is the moon sighted through modern instruments such as telescopes considered valid according to *Sharī‘ah*? Is it permissible to rely upon such sighting for commencing Ramaḍān or celebrating ‘Eid? Or is it necessary to establish moonsighting only through the natural method of the naked eye, without using any modern devices like telescopes?”

Answer: “Muslims have not been made responsible by *Sharī‘ah* to use telescopes or similar instruments for moonsighting. However, if someone chooses to make the effort and uses a telescope or binoculars to see the moon, then such sighting will be considered valid in *Sharī‘ah*, because these devices merely strengthen human vision. Observing through them is, in reality, also observing through the human eye itself.

¹ Fatwā No. 1050-793/D=9/1434, Dārul-Iftā’, Dārul-‘Ulūm Deoband

Therefore, when the basis of the ruling (i.e., sighting with the eye) is achieved, the ruling (i.e., the beginning of the new month) will also apply.”¹

In 2025, a question was sent from Australia to *Dārul Iftā’* Binorī Town regarding the ongoing differences in moonsighting practices:

Question: “In Australia, there are several issues and differing opinions regarding moonsighting: Some follow astronomical calculations and announce Ramaḍān and ‘Eīd before the actual sighting. Some follow global sighting. Some follow the sighting of neighbouring countries. Some adhere strictly to local sighting. As a result, there are sometimes two or even three different ‘Eīd days in one country.

While these differences cannot be completely eliminated, they may be reduced. If optical aids (such as telescopes) are used, then it is possible that in cases of potential visibility, the moon might actually be sighted. And if visibility is not possible, then even with such instruments the moon will not be visible.

¹ Fatwā No. 144409101725, *Dārul-Iftā’*, Jāmi‘ah ‘Ulūm Islāmiyyah, Allāmah Muḥammad Yūsuf, Binorī Town (Karachi)

Clarification: Among those scholars who follow local sighting, some argue that using optical aids is impermissible, since what is seen through a telescope is not the actual moon but a camera-produced image. Others, however, permit such use, clarifying that they are referring to instruments which merely enhance the visibility of the moon when it is naturally possible to see it, and not devices that artificially produce an image through clouds.

Hence the question: Is it permissible to use such optical aids that only clarify the moon's natural visibility and do not generate an artificial image? A detailed and satisfactory answer is requested."

Answer: As for the ruling on sighting the moon through a telescope, the *Sharī'ah* has kept this matter simple and free of burden, so that people in every time and place can easily determine the beginning and end of Islamic months and thus perform acts of worship such as fasting, *ʿĪd*, and *Hajj* with ease.

Accordingly, the *Sharī'ah* has made the basis of determining the new month the sighting of the moon with the human eye. Muslims have not been obligated to use telescopes or similar devices for this purpose.

However, if someone chooses to use a telescope and it is of the type that, like spectacles, merely magnifies distant objects - enhancing vision but not creating anything that does not exist - then its use is permissible, and the sighting through it will be considered valid in *Shari'ah*.

This is because sighting through such a telescope is, in reality, still sighting with the human eye. Therefore, when the basis of the ruling (i.e., sighting with the eye) is fulfilled, the ruling (i.e., the commencement of the new month) also applies.

However, if a telescope or optical device were to show something non-existent, or reveal a moon below the horizon, or display a moon from another horizon beyond one's own locality, then the sighting obtained through such an instrument would not be valid.”¹

13.5 Common Concerns Regarding the use of Telescopes

There are some scholars who have raised objections to the use of telescopes for moonsighting by drawing

¹ Fatwā No. 144701100075, Dārul-Iftā', Jāmi'ah 'Ulūm Islāmiyyah, Allāmah Muḥammad Yūsuf, Binorī Town (Karachi)

Qiyās (analogies) from other *Fiqh* discussions - such as *Ḥurmat al-Muṣāharah* and *Khiyār al-Ru'yah*. However, these analogies are misplaced and do not apply to the issue of moonsighting. Below is a summary of what was compiled by the Central Hilal Committee of North America on this issue.¹

Explicit mention regarding the validity of beginning the month through reflection or refraction could not be found in the works of the *Ḥanafī* jurists. However, in other contexts, they have accepted vision through transparent mediums - such as glass - as genuine sighting, referring to it as *Nufūdh al-Başar* (the passage of sight through a medium). This shows that refraction, or the bending of light through a lens, does not invalidate vision. In physics, viewing through mirrors or reflective surfaces is called reflection, and the *Fuqahā'* have also discussed such cases. Some jurists viewed reflection as indirect vision, but others - such as 'Allāmah Ibn al-'Arabī (Mālikī), 'Allāmah 'Alā al-Dīn al-Samarqandī, and 'Allāmah al-Kāsānī (both

¹ The Central Hilal Committee of North America, *Moonsighting Essentials*, Pages: 224-229.

Ḥanafī) - explicitly considered it genuine sight of the object itself.

From a physical perspective, both the naked eye and optical instruments depend on the same light rays reflecting off the observed object. These rays enter the eye directly or through the telescope's lens. Hence, the act of seeing through a telescope is no different in essence - it is real sight of the same light from the same object.

13.6 Misunderstandings of Qiyās

Those who reject telescope use often rely on *Qiyās* drawn from rulings in other legal contexts, such as *Khiyār al-Ru'yah*, *Ḥurmat al-Muṣāharah*, *Rujū'*, *Yamīn*, and *Ṭalāq*. Yet, each of these cases has distinct reasoning and objectives unrelated to moonsighting.

In *Khiyār al-Ru'yah*, the aim is to gain full knowledge of an item's details. If a mirror or glass distorts the product's appearance, the buyer's right of return remains. However, if identification is clear - even without direct sight - the right ceases. The ruling thus depends on achieving adequate identification, not the medium of sight. In contrast, the purpose of

moonsighting is not to know the moon's features but merely to confirm its presence. Therefore, *Qiyās* between the two is invalid.

In *Ḥurmat al-Muṣāharah* (prohibition through lustful gaze or contact), the restriction applies only to direct sight because the entire ruling is based on precaution. Extending it to reflections would mean applying “caution upon caution,” which is unwarranted without independent evidence. Since this prohibition itself is preventive in nature, it cannot be extended further without clear textual proof. Thus, reflection-based sight does not establish *Ḥurmat*, not because reflection is unreal, but because such additional caution is legally unnecessary.

Likewise, *Rujū'* (revocation of divorce) based on sight follows the same principle as *Ḥurmat al-Muṣāharah*, requiring direct viewing, while in *Yamīn* and *Ṭalāq*, if one swears or makes divorce conditional on “seeing the moon,” such conditions are not fulfilled by viewing its reflection. This is due to *ʿUrf* (custom), as common usage implies direct sight when one says “I saw the moon.” However, jurists acknowledged that viewing a

reflection is in reality sighting the same moon - the ruling simply follows linguistic convention.

If in a given society people understood reflection as real sight, the rulings of *Yamīn* and *Ṭalāq* would apply accordingly. In contrast, when observing the moon through a telescope, both reality and custom agree that the observer is seeing the actual moon - not a reflection or an image. The instrument only magnifies what exists above the horizon; it does not create or simulate an image.

In summary, none of these classical rulings negate sighting through a medium that transmits actual light from the object. The purpose of *Ru'yah* in moonsighting is fulfilled by any genuine sight of the crescent, whether aided or unaided. The telescope does not replace or contradict the prophetic instruction of "Fast when you sight it," but simply facilitates it. Hence, sighting through optical instruments is valid for establishing the new month, while making *Qiyās* on unrelated *Fiqh* issues such as *Khiyār al-Ru'yah* or *Ḥurmat al-Muṣāharah* is erroneous and unfounded.

13.7 Eyeglasses and Optical Aids

The validity of a sighting made using optical aids is not established by *Qiyās* (analogy) on eyeglasses. Rather, it is based on the fact that such a sighting fulfils the purport of the blessed *Ḥadīth* - namely, the actual sighting (*Ru'yah*) of the moon itself. However, since the ruling of a sighting through an instrument may appear unclear to some due to the presence of an intermediary, Ḥaḍrat Thānvī referred to eyeglasses as a precedent. Eyeglasses, after all, are also an optical medium and interference between the eye and the object, yet sighting the moon while wearing them has never been disputed in *Fiqh*.

There are, in fact, notable similarities between eyeglasses and optical aids. Both rely on lenses - though in different ways. Lenses are the primary structural component of refracting telescopes and a secondary or supporting element in reflecting telescopes. Moreover, the same type of convex lens used in eyeglasses for hyperopia (farsightedness) is also used in refracting telescopes. From this angle, both share an identical optical mechanism.

This demonstrates that drawing a distinction between eyeglasses and telescopes purely on the basis of purpose - that one corrects vision to normal while the other enhances it beyond normal - is not sound. The *Shar'ī* ruling is simple: once the moon has been sighted, the month begins. The presence of an optical intermediary, or the enhancement of vision beyond its natural limit, does not invalidate the reality of *Ru'yah*.

Thus, even though their functions differ in intent - one to restore, the other to magnify - the fact remains that both employ the same type of lens and achieve sight through the same physical process. There is no decisive *Shar'ī* or rational basis to render one valid and the other invalid.¹

While all scholars agree that it is not *Wājib* to sight the moon through a telescope or any optical aid, the issue - particularly in Australia - extends beyond this point. The real concern is not the obligation of using such instruments, but the broader question of how the Muslim community can minimise the recurring

¹ Ibid, 231.

differences in the beginning and ending of lunar months.

At present, several approaches exist: global sighting, local sighting, regional sighting, and astronomical calculations. Within the calculation-based view itself, there are further divisions - some rely on the birth of the moon, while others use the possibility of visibility as their measure.

In such a context of diverse opinions and practices, debating the permissibility of telescopes seems misplaced, especially when their use does not contradict any explicit command of the Prophet ﷺ or any principle of *Shari'ah*.

When the use of an instrument does not violate divine instruction, and when scholars have established its permissibility, it should be regarded as a legitimate means of *Ru'yah*. Therefore, the allowance to use optical aids should be seen as an opportunity to promote unity rather than an issue for further division.

If using telescopes can help achieve greater accuracy and consistency in moonsighting - allowing Muslims

across Australia to begin Ramaḍān and celebrate ‘Eīd together - then dismissing this option based on weak analogies or misunderstandings serves no benefit.

In conclusion, everything I have written on the topic of *Ru’yat al-Hilāl* (moonsighting) was with the sincere intention of presenting the truth and clarifying the correct *Shar’ī* ruling. My objective has never been mockery, ridicule, or criticism for its own sake.

In my humble opinion, sufficient material has already been presented in this discussion. Although I have kept it concise and limited myself to only the essential points, I trust that, *In Shā’ Allāh* ﷻ, it will prove adequate for understanding the issue.

My prayer is that Allāh ﷻ accepts this humble effort, grants us a true understanding of the religion, and enables us all to act upon the blessed *Sunan* of the Prophet ﷺ with sincerity and steadfastness.

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50	Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim	Imām Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj	261	Maktabah Raḥmāniyyah, Lahore, Pakistan
51	Sharḥ Muslim	Imām al-Nawawī	676	Mu'assasat Qurṭubah, Egypt
52	Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd	'Abd al-Muḥsin al-'Abbād	—	—

53	Sunan Abī Dāwūd	Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī	275	Maktabah Raḥmāniyyah, Lahore, Pakistan
54	Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī	‘Alī ibn ‘Umar al-Dāraquṭnī	375	Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut, Lebanon
55	Sunan al-Kubrā	Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī	458	Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon
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57	Sunan al-Ṣughrā	Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasā‘ī	303	Dār al-Ta‘ṣīl, Egypt
58	Sunan al-Tirmidhī	Abū ‘Īsā Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā	279	Maktabah Raḥmāniyyah, Lahore, Pakistan
59	Sunan Ibn Mājah	Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd	273	Maktabah Raḥmāniyyah, Lahore, Pakistan
60	Sydney Sky Guide	—	—	Sydney, Australia
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63	Tafsīr al-Baghawī	Muḥyī al-Sunnah Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī	516	Dār Ṭayyibah, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
64	Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī	‘Allāmah Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī	691	Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, Beirut, Lebanon
65	Tafsīr al-Kabīr	‘Allāmah Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī	604	Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon

66	Tafsīr al-Nasafī	Abū al-Barakāt ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al- Nasafī	710	Dār al-Kalim al- Ṭayyib, Beirut, Lebanon
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70	Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās	‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās	68	Dār al-Kutub al- ‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon
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74	Telescopes in history. In P. Murdin (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Astronomy and Astrophysics	Peter Bond	—	Nature Publishing Group and Institute of Physics Publishing
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